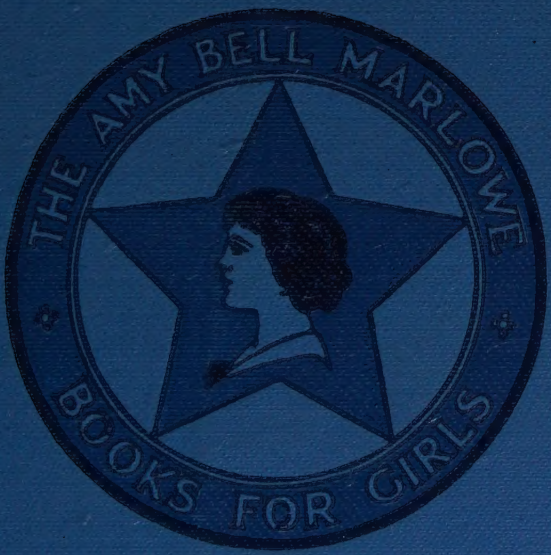
WYN'S CAMPING DAYS



AMY BELL MARLOWE

WYN'S CAMPING DAYS

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By AMY BELL MARLOWE

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IT DID SEEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE IN A HURRY, THAT EVERYTHING WENT WRONG.

Frontispiece (Page 80).

WYN'S CAMPING DAYS

OR

THE OUTING OF THE GO-AHEAD CLUB

BY

AMY BELL MARLOWE

AUTHOR OF
THE OLDEST OF FOUR, THE GIRL FROM SUNSET RANCH, A LITTLE MISS NOBODY, ETC.

Illustrated

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
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Wyn's Camping Days

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WYN'S CAMPING DAYS

CHAPTER I

THE GO-AHEAD CLUB

"Oh, girls! such news!" cried Wynifred Mallory, banging open the door of Canoe Lodge, and bringing into the living room a big breath of the cool May air, which drew out of the open fireplace a sudden balloon of smoke, setting the other members of the Go-Ahead Club there assembled coughing.

Grace Hedges, who was acting as fireman that week, turned an exasperated face, with a bar of smut across it, exclaiming:

"If another soul comes in that door and creates a back-draught until this fire gets to burning properly, I certainly shall have hysterics! I never did see such a mean old thing to burn."

"Never mind, Gracie. We're all here now—all six of us. There are no more Go-Aheads to come," observed Bessie Lavine, yawning over her book in the only sunny corner of the room.

"There! it's burning—finally," exclaimed

Grace, with blended disgust and thankfulness. "I never was cut out for a fireman, girls."

"Poor Gracie," purred Wyn, who had approached the blaze that was now beginning to curl through the hickory sticks piled more or less scientifically against the backlog. "Don't you know it needed just that back-draught to break the deadlock in the chimney and start your fire crackling this way?"

"Bah! it was just hateful," grumbled Grace. "I hate fire making. And it does seem as though my week for playing fireman comes around twice as often as it should." Wyn had moved rather too near to the darting flames, and Grace suddenly pulled the captain of the club aside. "*Don't* stand so near, Silly!" she cried.

"Fireman! save my che-ild!" wailed "Frank" Cameron, coming forward and winding her long arms around Wynifred. "What's the news, Wyn, dear? Nobody had the politeness to ask you. Wherefore all the excitement?"

"There must be a strike at the blacksmith shop," said Percy Havel, a curly-headed blonde girl.

"No!" cried Frank, with a droll twist of her rather homely features. "I'll wager they've laid off one of the hands of the town clock. Business is dreadfully dull. I heard my father say so."

She was a tall, lanky girl, was Frances Cameron, with a great mass of blue-black hair and flashing black eyes. She was thin, strong, and lacking in those soft curves of budding womanhood which girls of her age usually display. "Straight up and down, my dears," she often said. "Built upon the most approved clothespin plan, with every bone perfectly—not to say generously—developed."

"Well," said Wyn, laughing, "if you girls will give me a chance I will divulge my news."

"Be still!" commanded Frank. "The oracle speaks."

"Oh, hurry up, Wyn!" exclaimed Percy, coming nearer the group before the now roaring fire. "I've been dying to tell them."

"Well, girls," said Wyn, smiling, so that her brown eyes fairly danced. "Mrs. Havel—Percy's aunt—says she will go."

"Fine!" exclaimed Frankie.

"You don't mean it, Wyn?" gasped Mina Everett. "Then we really *can* go camping?"

"And to Lake Honotonka?" put in Bessie.

"That's what we aimed to do; wasn't it?" demanded Wyn, laughing. "And when the Go-Ahead Club starts to do a thing, it usually arrives; doesn't it?"

"At least, the captain arrives for them," said

Frank, giving Wyn's arm a little squeeze. "We wouldn't get far in our 'go-ahead' plans if it wasn't for you, Wynnie."

"Such flattery!" protested the captain.

"You didn't have an easy time convincing *my* mother—I know that," said Mina, shaking her head. "You know, she's so afraid of water."

"And my mother is afraid of high winds," confessed Bessie. "Wyn had to coax to bring *her* around."

"And of course, Gracie's mother is afraid of fire," chuckled Frank; "and there you have the three elements. You can plainly see that Gracie knows very little about fire. She never built one in her life until we formed our camping club."

"Oh, well," observed Grace, trying to rub the smut off her face with a handkerchief and the aid of a pocket-mirror, "this is about the end of the fire season, thank goodness! If we go into camp after school closes, on Lake Honotonka, there won't be any fires to build."

"Oh, *won't* there?" cried Bessie. "You just wait. Instead of taking turns at being fireman for the week, as we do through the winter, we'll draw lots to see who shall build *all* the fires. And you know very well, Gracie, that you always *are* unlucky."

"Sure she is," agreed Frank. "She always

draws the very boobiest of all booby prizes out of the grab-bag."

"Oh, dear me!" wailed Grace, who was big, and handsome, and not a little lazy, "I do so hate to work, too. If there had been another set of girls I liked at Denton Academy, I'd never have joined the Go-Ahead Club."

"Right. Gracie is better fitted for a Fall-Behind Club," observed Wyn.

"But tell us, Wynnie," begged Mina. "Is it really all arranged? Has everybody agreed that we can go in our canoes to Lake Honotonka?"

"And stay all vacation if we like?" cried Percy.

"That is the understanding," Wyn assured them. "Percy's aunt is the very kindest lady who ever was——"

"Vote we buy her something nice," interposed Frank.

"That will come in due season," Wyn continued. "But Mrs. Havel went with me to all our people. She knows all about the place, of course——"

"So does my father," interposed Bessie.

"And he wasn't hard to convince," Wyn responded. "Of course, there are wild nooks along Honotonka's shores; but at the upper end is Braisely Park, where all those rich folks live;

and there's the village of Meade's Forge at this end of the lake. We can get supplies, or a doctor, or send a telephone message, easily enough. And what more does one want—camping out?"

"We'll have just a lovely time!" sighed Bessie. "I can hardly wait for school to close."

"A month and a half yet," said Frank Cameron. "And every day will seem longer than the one that preceded it. But then! when it does come——"

"Just think of living under canvas—and for weeks and weeks! It almost makes me feel spooky," declared Grace, beginning to grow enthusiastic.

These girls, all attending Denton Academy and living within the limits of that town, being the daughters of fairly well-to-do parents, had been able to enjoy many advantages as well as pleasures that poorer girls could not have; but none of them had chanced to experience the joys of a vacation in the woods.

During the preceding autumn they had become immensely interested in canoeing. Denton was situated upon the beautiful, winding Wintinooski, and the six members of the Go-Ahead Club had taken several Saturday cruises on the river. But never had they gone as far up the stream as Lake Honotonka.

That was a wide and beautiful sheet of water, thirty-five miles to the west of the town of Denton. Their boy friends had sometimes been allowed to go camping upon the shores of the lake; and their enthusiastic praise of the fun to be had under canvas had set Wynifred Mallory and her chums "just wild," as Frank Cameron expressed it, to try it too.

Wyn was a girl of determination and physical as well as moral courage. If she made up her mind that a thing was right, and she wanted it, she usually got it.

When the girls first broached their desire to spend the summer at the big lake, and actually live under canvas, not one of their parents encouraged the idea. Because the "Busters," a certain boys' club of the girls' friends, were going to the lake again for the long vacation, made no difference to the mothers and fathers—especially the mothers of Wyn and her chums of the Go-Ahead Club.

"It's no use," Bessie Lavine had reported, at their first meeting after the idea was born in Canoe Lodge, as the girls called their novel boathouse overhanging the bank of a quiet pool of the Wintinooski. "Even father won't hear of it. Six girls going alone into the wilds——"

"But the Busters and Professor Skillings will

be near our camp," Frank had cried. "That's what I told mother. But she couldn't see it."

Wyn had listened at that meeting to the opinions of all the other girls—and to their hopeless and disappointed complaints as well—and then she had taken the whole burden on her own shoulders.

"Don't you say another word at home about it, girls—any of you," she said. "Leave it to me. Our idea of living for the summer in the open is a good one. We'll come back to school in the fall with ginger and health enough to keep us going like dynamos during the next school year."

"But you can't make my mother see that," wailed Percy. "She only sees the snakes, and mosquitoes, and tramps, and big winds, and drowning, and I don't know but she visualizes earthquake shocks and volcanoes!"

"Give me a chance," said Wyn.

"Voted!" Frankie declared. "When Wyn sets out to do a thing we might as well give her her head. She's like Davy Crockett; and I hope all our folks will come down without being shot, like the historic 'coon."

And this present declaration of their captain, which had so aroused the Go-Ahead Club, was the result of Wyn Mallory's exertions.

She had first obtained the interest and co-operation of Percy's Aunt Evelyn, who was a widowed lady fond of outdoor life herself. Mrs. Havel was to act as chaperone. With this addition to their forces, the girls stood a much better chance to win over their parents to their plan.

And finally Wyn had gained the permission of the most obdurate parent. The cruise of the Go-Ahead Club in their canoes to Lake Honotonka, and their camping for the summer at some available spot along the lake shore, was decided upon.

"And are the Busters going?" asked Frank. "That's the next important matter."

"Oh, we can get along without those boys, I guess," scoffed Bessie.

"Yes, I know. We don't need 'em. And they are a great nuisance sometimes," admitted Frank, laughing. "But just the same, we'll have lots more fun with them around—especially Dave Shepard—eh, Wynnie?"

"I don't see that you need *me* to witness the truth of your statement, Frank," returned Wyn, flushing very prettily, for the girls sometimes teased her about Dave, who was her next-door neighbor. "Of course we want the boys, even if Bess *is* a man-hater."

"I guess they'll go," Frank said. "They liked it so much last year. And the professor is inter-

ested in the geological specimens to be found up that way."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mina. "Is Professor Skillings going with them again? He *is* so odd."

"He's very absent-minded," said Bessie.

Frank began to laugh again. "Say!" she began, "did you hear about what happened to him last week? Father met him coming down Lane Street—you know, it's narrow and the sidewalk in places is scarcely wide enough for two people to pass comfortably.

"There was poor Professor Skillings hobbling along with one foot continually in the gutter, his eyes fixed on a book he was reading as he walked. Father said to him:

"'Good morning, Professor! How are you feeling to-day?'

"'Why—why—why!' exclaimed the professor—you know his funny way of speaking. 'Why—why—why—I was very well when I started out, I thought. But I don't know what's come over me. Do you know, I've developed a pronounced limp since leaving the house!'"

"Well, the boys like him," Wyn said, when the girls' laughter had subsided.

"I thought I saw Dave Shepard and that 'Tubby' Blaisdell around here when I hurried

down from school to light the fire," remarked Grace.

At that moment a strange, scraping sound was heard right above the girls' heads. Bess and Mina jumped up.

"What's that?" cried Grace.

"It's something on the roof," declared Wyn.

Now, Canoe Lodge was built on a high bank over the river. One stepped from the level sward into the living room. The roof on one side was a short, sharp pitch; but over the river it ran out in a long, easy slope to shelter the canoe landing.

Suddenly there was a crash, and the very house shook. There was a wheezy shout of alarm, the sound of another voice in wild laughter, and some heavy body slid down the long side of the roof with the noise of an avalanche.

"The Busters!" shrieked Percy, and ran to a window overlooking the river.

CHAPTER II

THE BUSTERS

THE girls could overlook the lower slope of the long roof through the bay window at the end of the living room. They crowded to it after Percy Havel, and beheld a most amazing as well as ridiculous sight.

A very fat youth, in a blue and white striped sweater and with a closely-cropped yellow head, was face down upon a length of plank, which plank was sliding like a bobsled down the incline of green-stained shingles.

"It's Tubby!" gasped Frank Cameron.

"Oh! oh! oh!" squealed Mina. "Is he doing that for *fun?*"

Before any further comment could be made, the boy on the plank shot out over the edge of the roof and dived, with a mighty splash, into the deep water of the pool, adjoining which Canoe Lodge was built.

"He'll be drowned!" cried Grace, wringing her plump hands.

"It'll serve him right if he is!" exclaimed

Bessie. "What business had he on our roof, I want to know?"

"Poor Tubby!" cried Wyn, choked with laughter.

"Isn't he the most ridiculous creature that ever was?" rejoined Frank. "See there! he's come up to blow like a frog."

"It's a whale that comes up to blow," Wyn reminded her.

"Well! isn't Tubby Blaisdell a regular whale of a boy?" returned the black-eyed girl.

"There's Dave!" cried Mina.

"I knew the two wouldn't be far apart!" sniffed Bess Lavine.

"He's got a boat and is going to Tubby's rescue," cried Grace.

"But see Tubby flounder around!" Frankie observed. "Why! that boy couldn't sink if you filled his pockets with flatirons!"

"There! he *is* going under," ejaculated the more timorous Mina.

"Dave will get him, all right," declared Wyn, with confidence.

She and Dave Shepard had been good chums since they were both in rompers. Her girl friends might tease Wyn sometimes about Dave; but the girl had no brothers and Dave made up the loss to her in every way.

"Oh! he's going to spear him with that boathook!" gasped Mina again.

And really, it looked so. Tubby Blaisdell was splashing about in the pool before the canoe landing like a young grampus. Tubby was always getting into more or less serious predicaments, and he always "lost his head" and usually had to be aided by his friends.

In this case Dave Shepard prepared to literally spear him in the water. Dave—who was a tall, athletic boy, with a frank, pleasant face, if freckled, and close-cut brown curls in profusion—had driven the flat-bottomed skiff he had obtained from a neighboring landing, across the pool, and now, standing erect in the boat, with a single lunge impaled upon the boathook the tail of Tubby's coat.

His chum was going down, as Dave thrust the boathook; for the unfortunate victim of the accident had swallowed a quantity of water when he dived with the plank from the eaves of the roof of Canoe Lodge. There was no time to lose if Dave wished to rescue Tubby before serious injury resulted to the unfortunate fat youth.

It was something of a feat to bring Tubby Blaisdell alongside the skiff and haul him inboard without overturning the boat. But Dave accom-

plished it to the admiration of the girls—even to Bessie's satisfaction.

"Well, I'm glad he got Tubby out," said that damsel, nodding her head.

"Glad to know that you are so humane, Bess," laughed Frank.

The girls trooped out to learn at closer range if the Blaisdell youth was really injured or only exhausted.

He lay panting like a big fish in the bottom of the skiff. It was altogether too cold an evening for him to be exposed in his wet clothing. When the skiff's nose bumped into the shore, Dave Shepard leaped out with alacrity and secured the painter to a post.

"Get up out of there, Tubby!" he commanded. "You'll get your death of dampness. Come on!"

"Oh—oh—oh! I can't," chattered the fat youth. "I—I'm fr-roze to the ve-ry mar-row of m-m-my bones!"

"The chill has struck in awful deep, then, Tubby," cried Frank Cameron, from the river bank.

"Come on out of that!" commanded Dave. "I'm going to run you home so that you will not get cold."

"Me?" chattered Blaisdell, rising like a turtle

out of its shell. "Run me home? Wh-wh-why, I c-c-couldn't do it. You know I couldn't r-r-run that far, Dave."

"He must go right in by our fire and get warm," declared Wyn, quickly. "Get your things, girls, and we'll all go home and leave Dave and Tubby to enjoy that nice fire Grace built."

"That wet boy all over our nice rug!" exclaimed Bessie. "I object."

"Don't be hateful, Bess," admonished Grace.

"But what was he doing on our roof?" demanded the girl who claimed that she did not like boys.

At this Dave burst into a great laugh and was scarcely able to drag Tubby ashore.

"It's a wonder he didn't come right through on our heads," complained Frank. "He's so heavy."

"But he *would* do it," declared Dave, still laughing as he helped his fat friend up the bank to the door of Canoe Lodge. "It would have been a real good trick, too, if Tubby hadn't slipped."

"Always up to mischief!" sniffed Bessie Lavine. "That's why I dislike boys so."

"I don't see what he could do on our roof," said Wyn, wonderingly.

"And he had no business there!" cried Grace.

"Why," explained Dave, for Tubby could not defend himself. "We saw Grace making the fire, and we knew the wood was green. It made a big smudge coming out of the chimney, and Tubby thought he had a brilliant idea."

"I know!" exclaimed Frankie. "He had that plank to put over the top of our chimney. We'd have been smoked out, sure enough."

"That's it," chuckled Dave. "Tubby got up all right, and he got the plank up all right. But just as he tried to lift the plank to the top of the chimney his foot slipped, the board dropped, he fell on it as if he was coasting down hill, and—you saw the rest!"

"Oh—oh!" chattered Tubby. "Come on in and let me get—get to—to th-that f-f-fire. I'm *frozen!*"

"Here's the key, Dave," said Wyn, laughing (for the fat youth *did* look so funny), "and you can lock up when you go home and bring the key to my house. Don't you boys make a mess in here for us to clean up," she added.

"But they will. Boys always do," declared Bessie Lavine.

"Well, thank goodness, it won't be *my* turn to clean up after them, or make another fire," declared Grace.

"They will do no damage," returned Wyn,

with assurance, as the girls trooped away from the boathouse toward the town.

"They have to keep their camp clean," declared Frank. "I know that. Professor Skillings may be forgetful; but he is very particular about *that*. Ferdinand Roberts told me so."

"I expect those horrid Busters *do* know a lot more than we do about camping."

"Indeed they do," sighed Grace. "How'll we ever put up a tent big enough to house seven?"

"The boys will help us," declared Wyn.

"I expect we'll have to let them," grumbled Bess. "Or else pay a man to do it for us."

"My goodness me!" laughed Frances Cameron. "It must be a dreadful thing to hate boys like Bess does! They're awfully bad sometimes, I know——"

"Look at what those two boys tried to do to us this very evening," exclaimed Bessie.

"Oh, Tubby's always up to some foolishness," said Percy, laughing.

"And that Dave Shepard is just as bad!" cried Bess Lavine, tossing her head.

"Wyn won't agree with that statement," chuckled Frank.

"And all six of the Busters are full of mischief," went on the complaining one. "I wish

they were not going to the same place we are to camp."

"Why, Bess!" exclaimed Mina.

"I *do* wish that. They'll be around under foot all the time. And they'll play tricks, and be rough and rude, and I know they will spoil the summer for us."

"You go on!" came from Frank, with some scorn. "I guess I can hold up my end against the Busters."

"Just wait and see," prophesied Bessie, shaking her head. "I feel very sure that the Busters and the Go-Ahead Club will not get along well together at Lake Honotonka."

"It takes two parties for an argument," said Wyn Mallory, quietly. "And in spite of their mischief I believe in the Busters."

"Wait and see if what I say isn't true!" snapped Bessie, and turned off into a side street toward her own home.

CHAPTER III

POLLY

WYN MALLORY was one of those girls whom people called "different."

Not that there was a thing really odd about her. She was happy, healthy, more than a little athletic, of a sanguine temperament, and possessed a deal of tact for a girl of her age.

But there was a quality in her character that balanced her better than most girls are. That foundation of good sense on which only can be erected a lasting character, was Wyn's. She was just as girlish and "fly-away" at times, as Frances Cameron herself, or Percy Havel; but she always stopped short of hurting another person's feelings and she seemed to really enjoy doing things for others, which her mates sometimes acclaimed as "tiresome."

And don't think there was a mite of self-consciousness about all this in Wyn Mallory's make-up, for there wasn't. She enjoyed being helpful and kind because that was her nature—not

for the praise she might receive from her older friends.

Wyn was a natural leader. Such girls always are. Without asserting themselves, other girls will look up to them, and copy them, and follow them. Whereas a bad, or ill-natured, or haughty girl must have some means of bribing the weak-minded ones to gain a following at all.

The Mallory family was a small one. Wyn had a little sister; but there was a difference of twelve years between them. The family was a very affectionate one, and Papa Mallory, Mamma Mallory, and Wyn all worshipped at the shrine of little May.

So when at supper that Friday evening something was said about certain drygoods needed for the little one, Wyn offered at once to spend her Saturday forenoon shopping.

She had plenty to do that morning; Saturday morning is always a busy time for any school girl in the upper grades, and Wyn was well advanced at Denton Academy. But she hastened out by nine o'clock and went down town.

Denton was a pretty town, with good stores, a courthouse, well stocked library and several churches of various denominations. In the center was an ancient Parade Ground—a broad, well-shaped public park, with a huge flagstaff in the

middle of the main field, and Civil War cannon flanking the entrances.

Denton had a history. On this open field the Minute Men had marched and counter-marched; and before Revolutionary days, even, the so-called "train-bands" had paraded here. Like Boston Common, Denton's Parade Ground was a plot devoted for all time to the people, and could be used for no other purpose but that of a public park.

The streets that bordered the three sides of the Parade Ground (for it was of flat-iron shape) were the best residential streets of the town; yet Market Street—the main business thoroughfare—was only a square away from one side of the park.

Wyn Mallory on this bright May morning walked briskly along the shaded side of the park and turned off at Archer Street to reach the main stem of the town, where the shops stood in rows and the electric cars to Maynbury had the right of way in the middle of the street.

Her very first call was at Mr. Erad's drygoods and notion store. His shop was much smaller than some of the modern "department" stores that had of late appeared in Denton; but the old store held the conservative trade. Mr. Erad had been in trade, at this very corner, from the time he

was a smooth-faced young man; and now his hair and beard were almost white.

He was a pleasant, cheerful—and usually charitable—gentleman, with rosy cheeks and gold-rimmed spectacles. He spent most of his time "on the floor," greeting old customers, attracting new ones with his courtesy, and generally overseeing the salesmen.

He usually had a pleasant word and a handshake for Wyn when she entered his store; but this morning the old gentleman did not even notice her as she came through one of the turnstile doors.

He stood near, however, speaking with a girl of about Wyn's age—a girl who was a total stranger to the captain of the Go-Ahead Club. The stranger was rather poorly dressed. She wore shabby gloves, and a shabby hat, and shabby shoes. Besides, both her dark frock and the hat were "ages and ages" behind the fashion.

Her clothes were really so ugly that the girl herself did not have a chance to look her best. Wyn realized that after the second glance. And she saw that the strange girl was almost handsome.

She was as big as Grace Hedges; but she was dark. Her hair was beautifully crinkled where it lay flat against the sides of her head over her ears. At the back there was a great roll, and

it was glossy and well cared-for. Even a girl who cannot afford to dress in the mode can make her hair beautiful by a little effort.

This girl had made that effort and, furthermore, she had made herself as neat as anyone need be.

In addition to her beautiful hair, the stranger's other attractions can be enumerated as a long, well formed nose, well defined eyebrows and long lashes, and deep gray eyes that looked almost black in the shade of her broad brow. Her skin was lovely, although she was very much bronzed by the sun. A rose-flush showed through this tan and aided her red, full lips to give color to her face. Her teeth were two splendid, perfect rows of dazzling white; her chin was beautifully molded. This fully developed countenance was lit by intelligence, as well, and, with her well rounded figure and gentle, deprecating manner, Wyn thought of her instantly as a big helpless child.

Mr. Erad was speaking very sternly to her, and that, alone, made Wyn desire to take her part. She could not bear to hear anybody scold a person so timid and humble. And at every decisive phrase Mr. Erad uttered, Wyn could see her wince.

"I cannot do it. I do not see why I should,"

declared the storekeeper. "Indeed, there are many reasons why I should not. Yes—I know. I employed John Jarley at one time. But that was years ago. He would not stay with me. He was always trying something new. And he never stuck to a thing long enough for either he—or anybody else—to find out whether he was fitted for it or not.

"Hold on! I take that back. I guess there's *one* man in town," said Mr. Erad, with almost a snarl, "who thinks John Jarley stuck long enough on one job."

Wyn, frankly listening, but watching the girl and Mr. Erad covertly, saw the former's face flame hotly at the shot. But her murmured reply was too low for Wyn to hear.

"Ha! I know nothing was ever proved against him. But decent people know the other party, and know that he is square. John Jarley got out of town and stayed out of town. That was enough to show everybody that he felt guilty."

"You are wrong, sir," said the dark girl, her voice trembling, but audible now in her strong emotion. "You are wrong. It was my mother's ill health that took us into the woods. And the ill-natured gossip of the neighbors—just such things as you have now repeated—troubled my

mother, too. So father took us away from it all."

"If he was honest, he made a great mistake in running away at that time," asserted Mr. Erad.

"No, he made no mistake," returned the girl, her fine eyes flashing. "He did the right thing. He saved my mother agony, and made her last years beautiful. My father did no wrong in either case, sir."

"Well, well, well!" snapped Mr. Erad. "I cannot discuss the matter with you. We should not agree, I am sure. And I can do nothing for you."

"Wait, please! give me a chance! Let me work for you to pay for these things we need. I will work faithfully——"

"I have no place for you."

"Oh, sir——"

"My goodness, girl! *No,* I tell you. Isn't that enough? Beside, you are not well dressed enough to wait upon my customers. And you could not earn enough here to pay your board, dress decently, and pay for any bill of goods that you—or your father—may want."

The girl turned away. There was a bit of dingy veiling attached to the front of her old-fashioned hat, and Wyn saw her pull this down quickly over her face. The listener knew *why,*

and she had to wink her own eyes hard to keep back the tears.

She deliberately turned her back upon old Mr. Erad, whom she was usually so glad to see, and went hastily down the aisle. From her distant station by the notion counter she saw the drooping figure of the strange girl leave the store.

Wyn Mallory was worried. She could not see a forlorn cat on the street, or a homeless dog shivering beside a garbage can, that she was not tempted to "do something for it."

Dave Shepard often laughingly said that it was an adventure to go walking with Wyn Mallory. One never knew what she was going to see that needed "fixing." And Dave might have added, that if Wyn had him for escort, she usually got these wrong things "fixed."

She now hastened through her purchasing, not with any definite object in view, save that she wanted to get out of the store. Mr. Erad was not at all the nice, charitable man whom she had always supposed him to be. That is, it looked so now to the impulsive, warm-hearted girl.

Her mind was fixed upon the strange girl and her troubles. Wyn did not neglect the errand her mother had given her to do, although she hurried her shopping.

When she was out of the store, she drew a

long breath. "I couldn't breathe in that place—not well," she told herself. "I wonder where that poor girl has gone now?"

There was nobody to answer her, nor was the strange girl in sight. Wyn felt rather remorseful that she had not let her shopping wait and followed the strange girl out of the store immediately.

The stranger might have been in desperate straits. Wyn could not imagine anybody begging for goods, and for work, especially after the way Mr. Erad had spoken, unless in great trouble.

Wyn began to take herself seriously to task. The strange girl had disappeared and she had not even tried to help her, or comfort her.

"I might have gone out and offered some little help, or sympathy. How do I know what will become of her? And she may have no friends in town. At least, it is evident that she does not live here."

There were several other errands to do. All the time, especially while she was on the street, she kept her eye open for the strange girl whose name she presumed must be "Jarley."

But Wyn did not see her anywhere, and it seemed useless to wander down Market Street looking for her. So, when she had completed her purchases, she turned her face homeward.

She went up past Mr. Erad's store again and turned through Archer Street. As she crossed into the park she looked for a settee to rest on, for unconsciously she had walked more briskly than usual.

There, under a wide-limbed oak, was a green-painted seat, removed from any other settee; but there was a figure on it.

"There's room for two, I guess," thought Wyn; and then she made a discovery that almost made her cry out aloud. Its occupant was the very girl for whom she was in search!

Wyn controlled her impulse to run forward, and approached the bench quite casually. Before she reached it, however, she realized that the dark girl was crying softly.

Natural delicacy would have restrained Wyn from approaching the girl so abruptly. Only, she was deeply interested, and already knowing the occasion for her tears, the captain of the Go-Ahead Club could not ignore the forlorn figure on the bench.

Without speaking, she dropped into the seat beside the strange girl, and put her hand on the other's shoulder.

"My dear!" she said, when the startled gray eyes—all a-flood with tears—were raised to her own. "My dear, tell me all about it—*do*! If

I can't help you, I will be your friend, and it will make you feel lots better to tell it all to somebody who sympathizes."

"Bu-but you ca-can't sympathize with me!" gasped the other, looking into Wyn's steady, brown eyes and finding friendliness and commiseration there. "You—you see, you never knew the lack of anything good; you're not poor."

"No, I am not poor," admitted Wyn.

"And I don't want charity!" cried the strange girl quickly.

"I am not going to offer it to you. But I'd dearly love to be your friend," Wyn said. "You know—you're so pretty!" she added, impulsively.

The girl flushed charmingly again. "I—I guess I'm not very pretty in my old duds, and with my nose and eyes red from crying."

But she was really one of those few persons who are not made ugly by crying. She had neither red eyes nor a red nose.

"Do tell me what troubles you," urged Wyn, patting her firm, calloused hand.

Those hands were no soft, useless members—no, indeed! Pretty as she was, the stranger had evidently been in the habit of performing arduous manual labor.

"Where do you live, my dear?" asked Wyn, again, as her first question was not answered.

"Up beyond Meade's Forge," said the strange girl.

"Oh, my! On Lake Honotonka?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Please don't *ma'am* me!" cried the captain of the Go-Ahead Club. "My name is Wynifred Mallory. My friends all call me Wyn. Now, I want you to be my friend, so you must commence calling me Wyn right away."

"But—but you don't know me," said the other girl, hesitatingly.

"I am going to; am I not?" demanded Wyn, with her frank smile. "Surely, now that I have confided in you, you will confide in me to the same extent? Or, don't you like me?"

"Of course I like you!" exclaimed the still sobbing girl. "But—but I do not know that I have any right to allow you to be my friend."

"Goodness me! why not?" exclaimed Wyn.

"Why—why, we have a bad name in this town, it seems," said the other.

"Who have?" snapped Wyn, hating Mr. Erad harder than ever now.

"My father and I."

"What have you done that makes you a pariah?" exclaimed Wyn, fairly laughing now. "Aren't you foolish?"

"No. People say my father was not honest. I am Polly Jarley," said the girl, desperately.

"Polly Jolly?" cried Wyn. "Not much you are! You are anything but jolly. You are Polly Miserrimus."

"I don't know what that means, ma'am——"

"Wyn!" exclaimed the other girl, quickly.

"M—Miss Wyn."

"Not right. Just Wyn. Plain Wyn——"

"Oh, I couldn't call you plain," cried the poorly dressed girl, with some spontaneity now. "For you are very pretty. But I don't really know what Mis—Mis——"

"'Miserrimus'?"

"That is it."

"It's Latin, and it means miserable, all right," laughed Wyn. "And you act more to fit the name of 'Polly Miserrimus' than that of 'Polly Jolly.'"

"It's Jarley, Miss Wyn."

"But now tell me all about it, Polly," urged Wyn, having by this means stopped the flow of Polly's tears. "Surely it will help you just to free your mind. And don't be foolish enough to think that I wouldn't want to know you and be your friend if your poor father was the biggest criminal on earth."

"He isn't! He is unfortunate. He has been

accused wrongfully, and everybody is against him," exclaimed Polly, with some heat.

"All right. Then let's hear about it," urged Wyn, capturing both of the other girl's hands in her own, and smiling into her tear-drenched gray eyes.

CHAPTER IV

THE SILVER IMAGES

"DIDN'T you ever hear of us Jarleys?" Polly first of all demanded.

"Only as being interested in the wax-work business," replied Wyn, with twinkling eyes.

"I—I guess father never made wax-work," said Polly, hesitatingly.

She was an innocent sort of girl, who evidently lacked many advantages of education and reading that Wyn and her friends had enjoyed as a matter of course.

"Well, I never heard the name before to-day—not *your* name, nor your father's," Wyn said.

"Well, we used to live here."

"In Denton?"

"Yes, ma'am——"

"Will you stop that?" cried Wyn. "I am Wyn Mallory, I tell you."

"All right, Wyn. It's a pretty name. I'll be glad to use it," returned Polly.

"Prove it by using it altogether," commanded Wyn. "Now, what about your father?"

"MY DEAR, I WILL BE YOUR FRIEND." *Page 30.*

"I—I can't tell you much about it—much of the particulars, I mean," said the girl from Lake Honotonka, diffidently. "I don't really know them. Father never speaks of it much. But even as a tiny girl mother explained to me that when folks said father had done wrong I must deny it. That it was not so. It was only circumstances that made him appear in the wrong. And—you know, Wyn—your mother wouldn't lie to you!"

"Of course not!" cried Wyn, warmly. "Of course not!"

"Well, then, you'll have to believe just what I tell you. Father was in some business deal with a man here in Denton, and something went wrong. The other man accused father of being dishonest. Father could not defend himself. Circumstances were dead against him. And it worried mother so that it made her sick.

"So we all left town. Father had very little money, and he built a shack up there in the woods near Honotonka. We're just 'squatters' up there. But gradually father got a few boats, and built a float, and made enough in the summer from fishermen and campers to support us. Of course, mother being sick so many years before she died, kept us very poor. I only go to the district school winters. Then I have to walk

four miles each way, for we own no horse. Summers I help father with the boats."

"That's where you got such palms!" cried Wyn, touching her new friend's calloused hands again.

"It's rowing does it. But I don't mind. I love the water, you see."

"So do I. I've got a canoe. I'm captain of a girls' canoe club."

"That's nice," said Polly. "I suppose when you take up boating for just a sport it's lots better than trying to make one's living out of it."

"Well, tell me more," urged Wyn. "What are you in town for now? Why did I find you crying here on the bench?"

"A man hurt me by talking harshly about poor father," said the girl from Lake Honotonka.

"Come on! tell me," urged Wyn, giving her a little shake. Polly suddenly threw an arm about the town girl and hugged her tightly.

"I *do* love you, Wyn Mallory," she sobbed. "I—I wish you were my sister. I get so lonely sometimes up there in the woods, for there's only father and me now. And this past winter he was very sick with rheumatic fever. You see, there was an accident."

"He met with an accident, you mean?"

"Yes. It was awful—or it might have been

awful for him if he and I had not had signals that we use when there's a fog on the lake. I'll tell you.

"You see, there is a man named Shelton—Dr. Shelton—who lives in one of the grand houses at Braisely Park—you know, that is the rich people's summer colony at the upper end of the lake?"

"I know about it," said Wyn. "Although I never was there."

"Well, Dr. Shelton had his motor boat down at our float. He left it there himself, and he told father to go to the express office at Meade's Forge on a certain day and get a box that would be there addressed to Dr. Shelton. It was a valuable box.

"When father went for it the expressman would not give it up until he had telephoned to Dr. Shelton and recognized the doctor's voice over the wire. It seems that that box was packed with ancient silver images that had been found in a ruined temple in Yucatan, and had been sent to Dr. Shelton by the man who found them. They claim they were worth at the least five thousand dollars.

"The doctor had a party at his house right then, he said over the telephone, and he wanted father to come up the lake with the box. He

wanted to display his antique treasures to his friends.

"Now, it was a dreadfully bad day. After father had started down to the Forge in the motor boat he knew that a storm was coming. And ahead of it was a thick fog. He told Dr. Shelton over the 'phone that it was a bad time to make the trip the whole length of Lake Honotonka.

"The doctor would not listen to any excuses, however; and it was his boat that was being risked. And his silver images, too! Those rich people don't care much about a poor man's life, and if father had refused to risk his on the lake in the storm Dr. Shelton would have given his trade to some other boatkeeper after that.

"So father started in the *Bright Eyes*. He did not shoot right up the middle of the lake, as he would have done had the day been fair. The lake is twenty miles broad, you know, in the middle. So he kept near our side—the south side it is—and did not lose sight of the shore at first.

"But at Gannet Island he knew he had better run outside. You see, the strait between the island and the shore is narrow and, when the wind is high, it sometimes is dangerous in there. Why, ten years ago, one of the little excursion steamers

that used to ply the lake then, got caught in that strait and was wrecked!

"So father *had* to go outside of Gannet Island. The fog shut down as thick as a blanket before he more than sighted the end of the island. He kept on, remembering what Dr. Shelton had said, and that is where he made a mistake," said Polly, shaking her head. "He ought to have turned right around and come back to our landing."

"Oh, dear me! what happened to him?" cried Wyn, eagerly.

"The fog came down, thicker and thicker," proceeded the boatman's daughter. "And the wind rode down upon father, too. Wind and fog together are not usual; but when the two combine it is much worse than either alone. You see, the thick mist swirling into father's eyes, driven head-on by the wind, blinded him. He steered a shade too near the shore.

"Suddenly the *Bright Eyes* struck. A motor boat, going head-on upon a snag, can be easily wrecked. The boat struck and stuck, and father leaped up to shut off the engine.

"As he did so, something swished through the blinding fog and struck him, carrying him backward over the stern of the boat. Perhaps it was the loss of his weight that allowed the *Bright Eyes* to scrape over the snag. At least, she did so

as father plunged into the lake, and as he sank he knew that the boat, with her engine at half speed, was tearing away across the lake.

"It was the drooping limb of a tree that had torn father from the stern of the motor boat," continued Polly Jarley. "It may have been a big root of the same tree, under water, that had proved the finish of the boat. For nobody ever saw the *Bright Eyes* again. She just ran off at a tangent, into the middle of the lake, somewhere, we suppose, and filled and sank."

"Oh, dear me! And your father?" asked Wyn, anxiously.

"He got ashore on the island. Then he signalled to me, and I went off during a lull in the storm, and got him. He went to bed, and it was three months before he was up and around again.

"He suffered dreadfully with rheumatic fever," continued Polly, sadly. "And all the time Dr. Shelton was talking just as mean about him as he could. He didn't believe his story. He even said that he thought my father took the motor boat down the river somewhere and sold it. And the way he talked about that box of silver images——"

"Oh, oh!" cried Wyn. "I'd forgotten about them. Of course they were lost, too?"

"Sunk somewhere in Lake Honotonka," de-

clared Polly. "Father knows no more about where the boat lies than Dr. Shelton himself. But there are always people ready and willing to pick up the evil that is said about a person and help circulate it.

"While father was flat on his back, folks were talking about him. We had to raise money on the boats to pay for our food and father's medicine. If we don't have a good season this summer we will be unable to pay off the chattel mortgage next winter, and will lose the boats. I tell you, Miss Wyn, it is *hard.*"

"You poor, dear girl!" exclaimed Wyn. "I should think it *was* hard. And that mean man accuses your father——"

"Well, you see, there was father's past record against him. The story of his trouble here in Denton followed him into the woods, of course. If anybody gets mad at us up at the Forge, they throw the whole thing up to us. I—I *hate* it there," sobbed the boatkeeper's daughter.

"And yet, it is harder on poor father. He is straight, but everything has been against him. I saw he felt dreadfully these past few days because I need some decent clothes. And there is no money to buy any.

"So I thought I would come to town and see some old friends of mother's who used to come

and see us years ago. Yes, there were a few people who stuck to mother, even if they did not quite approve of poor father. But, when I paddled 'way down here——"

"Not in a canoe?" cried Wyn.

"Yes, I came down very easily yesterday evening and stopped at a boatman's house on the edge of town. I shall go back again to-day. The Wintinooski isn't kicking up much of a rumpus just now. The spring floods are about all over."

"But you must be a splendid hand with a paddle," said Wyn. "It's a long way to the lake."

"Oh! I don't mind it," said Polly. "Or, I *wouldn't* mind it if it had done me the least good to come down here," and she sighed.

"You are disappointed?" queried Wyn.

"Dreadfully! I did not find mother's old friends. I had not heard from them for two or three years, and found that they were away—nobody knows where. I did not know but I might get work here in town for a few weeks, and live with these old friends, and so earn some money. I am so shabby! And father isn't fit to be seen.

"And then—then there was a man in town who used to befriend mother. I know when I was quite a little girl, the year after we had gone to the woods to live, father was ill for a long time and mother had to have things. She went to

this storekeeper in Denton and he let her have things on account and we paid him afterward. Oh, we paid him—every cent!" declared Polly, again wiping her eyes.

"And I hoped he would—for mother's sake—help us again. I went to him. I—I reminded him of how father once worked for him, and that he knew mother. But he was angry about something—he would not listen—he would neither give me work nor let me have goods charged. I—I—well, it just broke me down, Wyn Mallory, and I came here to cry it out."

"It's a shame!" exclaimed Wyn. "I am just as sorry for you as I can be. And I believe that your father is perfectly honest and that he never in his life intended to defraud anybody."

It was that blessed *tact* that made Wynifred Mallory say that. It was the sure way to Polly Jarley's heart; and Wyn's words and way opened the door wide and Polly took her in.

"You—you *blessed* creature!" cried the boatman's daughter. "I know you must have been 'specially sent to comfort me. I *was* so miserable."

"Of course I was sent," declared Wyn. She did not propose to tell her new acquaintance that she had observed her in Erad's store and had looked for her all over Market Street.

"Such things are meant to be. If we trust to God we surely shall have release from our difficulties. That is just as sure as the day follows the night," declared Wyn, with simple, straightforward faith.

"And just see how it is proved in this case. You were in trouble, and sat here crying, and needed somebody to help you. And I came along perfectly willing and able to help you, and you are going to be helped."

"I *am* helped!" declared Polly. "You just put the courage back into me. I didn't know what to do——"

"Do you know any better now?" demanded Wyn, quickly.

"We—ell, I——"

"That doesn't sound as though you had *quite* made up your mind," said Wyn, with a little laugh.

"Never mind. I can stand even going back home with my hands empty, better than before I met you," declared Polly, bravely.

"But you won't go back home empty-handed."

"Oh, Wyn! Can you get me work?"

"No, not here. Nor do I believe you ought to leave your father alone up there for so long. I expect he is not very well yet?"

"No. He is not," admitted Polly.

"Then, you go home. That is the best place for you, anyway. But before you go you shall make such purchases as you may need——"

Polly drew away from her along the seat, and her gray eyes grew brighter. "Oh, Miss Mallory!" she murmured. "Don't do *that.*"

"Don't do what?" demanded Wyn.

"Don't spoil it all."

"Spoil what-all?" cried Wyn, in exasperation. "I'm not going to spoil anything. But you listen to me. This is sense."

"I—I couldn't take charity from *you*—a stranger."

"I offer to lend you twenty dollars. You can pay it back when you choose."

"Twenty dollars! You lend me twenty dollars?"

"Yes. I have quite some spending money given to me, and I have been saving nearly all of it for some time. So I can easily spare it."

"But I don't know when I can repay you."

"I can tell you, then. You can pay me back this very summer."

"This summer, miss?"

"Don't call me 'miss'!" cried Wyn, in greater exasperation. "I have told you my name is 'Wyn'! And I mean exactly what I say. This is a perfectly straight business proposition," and

she laughed her full-throated laugh that made even Polly Jarley, in her trouble, smile.

"Then your business, Wyn Mallory, must be the saving of people from trouble—is that it? For there is no reason in what you say you will do—Oh, I can't accept it. It would be charity!" cried Polly, again clasping Wyn's hands.

"It is not charity," said Wyn, firmly, opening her purse. "And I'll quickly show you why it is not. You see, Polly Jolly—and I want you to smile at me and look as though you fitted that name. You see, I am captain of the Go-Ahead Club."

"The Go-Ahead Club?"

"Yes. We are six girls. We each own canoes. And we are just *crazy* to spend next summer under canvas."

"You are going camping?"

"That is our intention," Wyn said, nodding.

"Oh, then! come up to Lake Honotonka," cried Polly. "I can show you beautiful places to camp, and we can have lots of fun——"

"That likewise is our intention," broke in Wyn. "We have just decided to camp for the summer on the shore of the lake. Rather, our parents, guardians, and the cat, have finally agreed to our plans. We shall come up there the week after the Academy closes."

"Now, we want you, Polly, to find us the very best camping place, to arrange everything for us, and don't have it too far from your place, and from Meade's Forge. I expect the Busters will camp on one of the islands. The Busters, you see, are our boy friends who are likewise going to the lake. They were there last year with Professor Skillings."

"I remember them," said Polly, wonderingly. "And you and your girl friends are coming?"

"Just the surest thing you know, Polly," declared Wyn. "So you are going to take this twenty dollars," and she suddenly thrust the bill into the other girl's hand and closed her fingers over it. "Then, next summer, we shall let you pay it back in perfectly legitimate charges, for we'll want you and your father to help us a good deal.

"Now, what say, Polly Jolly? Will you please let your face fit your name—as I have rechristened you? Smile, my dear—smile!"

"I could cry again, Wyn—you are so kind!" half sobbed the other girl.

"Now, you stop all that foolishness—a great, big girl like you!" exclaimed Wyn. "Turn off the sprinkler, as Dave Shepard says. Get right up now and go briskly about your buying. And write to me when you get home and write just as

often as you can till we meet at the lake this summer."

"You dear!" ejaculated Polly.

"You're another. How will I address you—at the Forge?"

"Yes, and you must give me your address," said the boatman's daughter, eagerly.

Wyn did so. The two girls, such recent but already such warm friends, kissed each other and Polly Jarley went briskly away toward Market Street. Wyn stopped on the bench for several minutes and watched the girl from Lake Honotonka walk away, while a smile wreathed her lips and a warm light lingered in her brown eyes.

CHAPTER V

BESSIE LAVINE

SUDDENLY a gay voice hailed Wyn.

"Hi, Captain of the Go-Aheads! What are you doing, mooning here?"

"Why, Bess!" returned Wyn, turning to greet Bessie Lavine. "I didn't see you coming along."

"No; but I saw you, my noble captain."

"Going shopping?"

"Aye, aye, Captain!" cried the other member of the Go-Ahead club. "But who was that I saw you with? Didn't I see you talking to that girl who just crossed Benefit Street?"

"Oh, yes."

"Who was she?"

"Polly Jarley. She is daughter of a boatman up at the lake. And wasn't it fortunate that I met her? She can find us a camping place and get everything fixed up there for our coming."

"What's her name?" asked Bess, sharply.

"Polly Jarley."

"And she lives up there by the lake?"

"So she says."

"Her father is John Jarley, of course?" queried Bessie, looking down at Wyn, darkly.

"Yes. That is her father's name," said Wyn, beginning to wonder at her friend's manner.

"Well! I guess you don't know those Jarleys very well; do you?"

"Why—I——"

Wyn hesitated to tell Bessie that she had only just now met the unfortunate boatman's daughter. She remembered Polly's story, and what she had overheard Mr. Erad say in the drygoods store.

"You surely *can't* know what and who they are, and still be friendly with that girl?" repeated Bessie, her eyes flashing with anger.

"Why, my dear," said Wyn, soothingly. "Don't speak that way. Sit down and tell me what you mean. I certainly have not known Polly long; and I never met her father——"

"Oh, they left this town a long time ago."

"So she told me. And she said something about her father having been accused of dishonesty——"

"I should say so!" gasped Bessie. "Why, John Jarley almost ruined *my* father. He was a traitor to him. They were in a deal together—it was when my father first tried to get into the real estate business here in Denton—and this John Jarley sold him out. Why, everybody knows it!

It crippled father for a long time, and what Jarley got out of playing traitor never did him any good, I guess, for they were soon as poor as Job's turkey, and they went to live in the woods there. He's a poor, miserable wretch. Father says he's never had a stroke of luck since he played him such a mean trick—and serves him right!"

Wyn stared at her in amazement, for Bessie had gone on quite breathlessly and had spoken with much heat. Finally Wyn observed:

"Well, dear, *your* father has done well since those days. They say he is one of our richest citizens. Surely you can forgive what poor John Jarley did, for he and his daughter are now very miserable."

"I don't see why we should forgive them," cried Bessie, hotly.

"Why, Bess! This poor girl had nothing to do with her father wronging your father——"

"I don't care. She's his daughter. It's in the blood. I wouldn't trust her a single bit. I wouldn't speak to her. And no girl can be *her* friend and mine, too!"

"Why, Bess! don't say that," urged Wyn. "You and I have been friends for years and years. We wouldn't want to have a falling out."

"I see no need for us to fall out," exclaimed Bessie, her eyes still flashing. "But I just won't

associate with girls who associate with those low people—there now!"

"Now do you feel better, Bess?" asked Wyn, laughing.

That was the worst of Wyn Mallory! All the girls said so. One couldn't "fight" with her. For, you see, it takes two at least to keep a quarrel alive, although but one to start it.

"Well, you don't know how mean that man, Jarley, was to my father. And years ago they were the very best of friends. Why! they went to school together, and were chums—just as thick as you and I are, Wynnie—just as thick. And for him to be a traitor——"

"If he was, don't you think he has been paying for it?" asked Wyn, sensibly. "According to what I hear he is poor, and ill, and unfortunate——"

"I don't know whether he is or not. It was only a few weeks ago we heard of his stealing a motor boat up there at the lake and some other valuables, and selling them——"

"He wouldn't be poor if he had done that; would he?" interrupted Wyn. "For I know for a fact that he is very, very poor."

She did not want to tell Bessie that she had given Polly Jarley money; but she did not believe that the boatman's daughter would be in need as

she was if Mr. Jarley were guilty of the crime of which he had been so recently accused.

"Well, I haven't a mite of sympathy for them," declared Bessie.

"Perhaps you cannot be expected to have sympathy for the Jarleys," admitted Wyn, in her wholesome way. "But you won't mind, will you, dear, if *I* have a little for poor Polly?" and she hugged Bessie, who had sat down, close to her. "Come on, Bessie—don't be mad at *me*."

"Oh, dear! nobody can be mad at you, Wyn Mallory. You do blarney so."

"Ah, now, my dear; it isn't blarneying at all!" laughed Wyn. "It's just showing you the sensible way. We girls don't want to be flighty, and have 'mads on,' as Frank says, for no real reason. And this poor girl will never trouble you in the world——"

"I wish she wasn't up at that lake," declared Bessie.

"Why, Bess! the lake's plenty big enough," said Wyn, chuckling. "We won't have to see much of the Jarleys. Although——"

"I sha'n't go if she is to be on hand," asserted Bessie, with vehemence.

"One would think poor Polly Jarley had an infectious disease. She won't hurt you, Bess."

"I don't care. I feel just as papa does about it.

He and Jarley were closer than brothers. But he wouldn't speak to Jarley now—no, sir! And I don't want anything to do with that girl."

With this Bess jumped up, preparing to go on her way to the stores. Wyn was going home, and she gathered up her packages.

"You'll think differently about it some day, Bess," she said, thoughtfully, as her friend tripped away. "How foolish to hold rancor so long! For years and years those two men have hated each other. And I expect Polly would dislike Bess just as Bess dislikes her—and for no real reason!

"And it seems too bad. Mr. Lavine is very rich while John Jarley is very poor. Usually it is the wicked man who prospers—for a time, at least. I really don't understand this," sighed Wyn, traveling homeward. "If Polly's father is guilty as they believe he is, what did he do with the money he must have made by his crimes?"

CHAPTER VI

OFF FOR THE LAKE

ALTHOUGH the members of the Go-Ahead Club—some of them, at least—had expressed the wish that the time to start for Lake Honotonka was already at hand, the remaining days of May and the busy month of June slipped away speedily. At odd hours there was a deal to do to prepare for the outing which the girl canoeists longed to enjoy.

Wyn received several letters from Polly Jarley, more hopeful letters than she might have expected considering the situation in which the boatman's daughter was placed. Evidently Polly was trying to live up to her "rechristening."

In reply Wyn made several arrangements for the big outing which she confided only in a general way to the club. Polly had selected a beautiful spot just east of the rough water behind Gannet Island, and not half a mile from her father's boathouse, for the camping place of the Go-Ahead Club, and she wrote Wyn that she had stuck

up a sign pre-empting the spot for the girls from Denton.

It was arranged with the Busters, who would go up to Lake Honotonka the same day as the Go-Aheads, to send the stores together by bateau. Wyn arranged to have the girls' stores housed by the Jarleys, for she did not think that the canvas of either the sleeping or the cook-tent would be sufficient protection if there came a heavy storm.

The boys had picked their camping place the year before. They would go to the far end of Gannet Island, where there was a cave which promised a fairly good storehouse for their goods and chattels. They proposed to erect their one big tent right in front of this cavity in the rock—in conjunction therewith, in fact. There was a backbone of rock through the center of the island in which Professor Skillings, as a geologist, was very much interested, and had been for a long time.

To purchase the stores cost considerable money. The girls had to do it all out of their own pockets, and to tell the truth some of them had to mortgage their spending allowance for the entire summer to "put up" their pro rata sum for these supplies.

"Papa says it is going to cost me as much

as though I were spending the summer at Newport," Percy Havel said, with a sigh.

"*My* folks have expressed some surprise," admitted Mina Everett. "They thought we were going to camp out *al fresco;* but they can scarcely believe now that we are not going to live upon *pâté de foie gras* and have a French chef to get up the meals."

"My father began to say something about the cost the other night," giggled Frank Cameron. "But I put the stopper on poor pa very quickly. I told him that I'd willingly give up the camping-out scheme if he'd buy a touring car. I said:

"'Pa, I've figured the whole thing out, and we can do it easily enough. The car, to begin with, will cost $5,000, which at six per cent. is only $300 a year. If we charge ten per cent. off for depreciation it will come to $500 more. A good chauffeur can be had for $125 per month, or $1,500 per year. I have allowed $10 per week for gasoline and $5 for repairs. The chauffeur's uniform and furs will come to about $200. Now, let's see what it comes to. Three hundred, plus five hundred, and then the chauffeur's salary at——'

"'Don't bother me any more, my dear,' says pa. 'I know what it comes to.'

"'What *does* it come to, Pa?' I asked. 'How quick you are at figures!'

"'My dear,' he said, impressively, 'it comes to a standstill right here and now. We will have no touring car. I'll say no more about the Go-Ahead Club.'

"Oh, you can manage the grown-ups," concluded Frank, with a laugh, "if you go about it right."

The bateau of stores went up the Wintinooski two days before the girls and boys were to start; yet for fear that all might not have gone right with the provisions, Wyn insisted that each member of the Go-Ahead Club pack in her canoe the usual "day's ration" that they had been taught should always be carried for an emergency.

"It only adds to the weight," grumbled Grace. "And dear knows, the old blankets and things that you make us paddle about, makes the going hard enough."

"That's it—kick!" exclaimed Frank. "You'd kick if your feet were tied, Gracie."

"Assuredly!" returned the big girl.

"Now, don't fuss at the rules of the club that have long ago been voted upon and adopted," said Wyn, cheerfully. "We do not know what is going to happen. Somebody might hit a snag. It would take hours to make repairs—

perhaps we would have to camp for the night somewhere on the way. We want to be prepared for all such emergencies."

"Well, the Busters aren't loading themselves down with all this truck," declared Grace, with vigor.

"That's all right. Let us be the wise ones," laughed Wynifred. "The boys may want to borrow of us before we get to Lake Honotonka."

"Why, Wynnie!" cried Bess Lavine, "if you are expecting all sorts of breakdowns and misfortunes, I shall be afraid to start at all."

"Guess I'll go on with Aunt Evelyn to the Forge, and send my canoe by train," laughed Percy Havel. "Wyn's got us drowned already."

But on the morning of the departure not one of the girls prophesied misfortune. As for the boys, they were bubbling over with fun.

Professor Skillings was going to paddle up the river with them, although Mrs. Havel would take the afternoon train to the lake. The professor had gone on ahead; but Dave Shepard arranged the two clubs in line and boys and girls marched through the streets and down to the river, being hailed by their friends and bidden good-bye by their less fortunate mates.

Somebody started singing, and the twelve

young voices were soon in the rhythm of "This is the Life!" Dave and Tubby were ahead, their paddles over their shoulders, each carrying his blanket-roll in approved scout fashion. The roll made Tubby Blaisdell look twice his real size.

As the party struck across the sward toward the boathouses Dave suddenly dropped his paraphernalia and started on a run for the river.

"Hi, there!" he shouted. "The professor is in trouble, boys!"

The Busters bounded away after him, and the girls, catching the excitement, followed along the bank of the swiftly-flowing Wintinooski. There was Professor Skillings in his canoe, drifting rapidly into the middle of the current, and plainly without his paddle. Indeed, that useful —not to say necessary—instrument, capped the pile of Professor Skillings' impedimenta on the bank. He had evidently—in his usual absent-minded manner—stepped into his canoe and pushed off from shore without getting his cargo aboard.

Amid much laughter Dave and Ferd Roberts got a skiff and went after their teacher. Professor Skillings chuckled at his own troubles. Although he was well past the meridian of life, he had neither lost his sense of the ridiculous nor

his ability to laugh at a joke when it was on himself.

While the boys were rescuing their friend and mentor, the Go-Ahead Club proceeded to get out their own canoes and load them. The weight had to be distributed in bow and stern of the light, cedar craft; but Wyn and her mates had practised loading and launching their boats so frequently that there was little danger of an overset now.

Grace was still growling about the food and cooking apparatus distributed among the canoeists. Wyn said, laughing:

"That is still the bone of contention; is it, Gracie?"

"What *is* a 'bone of contention'?" demanded Mina, innocently.

"Why, the jawbone, of course, silly!" cried Frank.

"Don't you mind about my jawbone, miss!" snapped Grace.

"Oh, don't let's fight, girls," Mina said, soothingly.

"Better a dinner of herbs with contentment than a stalled ox and trouble on the side," misquoted Frank.

The six girls quickly shot their canoes out into the stream. At this point the current was swift;

but above Denton the river broadened into wide pools through which the current flowed sluggishly and it would be easier paddling.

The girls set into a steady stroke, led by their captain, and passed the pretty town in a few minutes. Wyn could see the upper windows of her home and noted a white cloth fluttering from one. She knew that her mother was standing there with the field-glasses and Baby May. Perhaps the little one was trying to see "sister" through the strong glasses.

So Wyn pulled off her cap and swung it over her head and the six canoes immediately fell out of alignment.

"Don't do that, Wyn!" shouted Bess. "Those boys will catch up with us."

"Well, we want them to; don't we?" asked the captain of the Go-Aheads, good naturedly. "We're going to lunch together, and if we make the poor boys work too hard they'll eat every crumb we've got and leave nothing for poor little we-uns."

"So *that's* why you made us bring all this food?" demanded Bess, in disgust. "Can't those boys feed themselves?"

"Oh, they'll do their share," Wyn replied, laughing. "You'll see. Don't you see how heavily laden Tubby's canoe is? I warrant he

has enough luncheon aboard for a small army."

"I can't look over my shoulder—I never can," quoth Bessie. "Paddling a canoe takes more of my attention than riding a bicycle."

"Or a motorcycle. Those things are just awful," cried Mina Everett.

"Shucks!" exclaimed the lively Frankie. "A motorcycle is only an ordinary bicycle driven crazy by over-indulgence in gasoline."

"How smart!" cried Bessie. "But you'd better save your breath to cool your porridge——"

"Or, better still, to work your paddle," commented Grace, with a swift glance behind. "Those Busters are coming up the river, hand over fist."

"With poor Tubby in the rear, of course," said Frank, glancing back. "The tide is certainly against *him*."

"Oh, dear me!" giggled Percy, "poor Tubby was more than 'tide' last week when he took Annabel Craven out on the river. Did you hear about it? You know—the night before graduation."

"I believe that fat youth is sweet on Annabel," announced Bessie, shaking her head seriously.

"What do you suppose Ann thinks of Tubby?" cried Grace.

"You know how it is," chuckled Frank. "Nobody loves a fat boy. Go on, Percy. What happened to poor old Tubby?"

"Why, he inveigled Annabel down to the river and got her into a boat and was going to row her around in the moonlight. You know it was just a scrumptious night."

"M-m-m! wasn't it?" agreed Frank.

"Well," said Percy, "Tubby got in without overturning the boat and settled to work. The current was pretty swift and he struck right out into it and headed up stream.

"And there he tugged, and tugged, and tugged, giving all his attention to the oars and having none to spare for Annabel. By and by, after Tubby had tugged, and grunted, and perspired for half an hour, he said:

"'Say, I never saw anything like this current to-night—not in all my born days! I've been pulling like a horse for half an hour and I don't see that we've made as much as a dozen feet!'

"And then Annabel spoke up real pretty, and says she:

"'Oh, Mr. Blaisdell! I've just thought of something. The anchor fell overboard some time ago and I forgot to tell you. Do you suppose it could have caught on something?'"

The other girls were intensely amused at this, for they all appreciated Annabel Craven's character as well as poor Tubby's good-natured blundering. But while they laughed and chattered in this way the Busters crept steadily up on them.

"I told you how it would be," said Bess, tartly, "if we didn't hurry up."

"What's the matter with you girls?" demanded Dave Shepard. "One would think you were sent for and couldn't come, by the way you paddle. You'll get to the lake before noon at this rate."

"Not much danger of that, Davie," returned Wyn. "And you know we agreed to stop at Ware's Island for lunch."

"Oh, I wish that was right here!" grunted a voice from the rear, where Tubby Blaisdell was paddling away with almost as much splashing as a small side-wheel steamer.

"My goodness, boy!" cried Ferd Roberts. "You're not hungry so soon, are you?"

"Soon?" repeated Tubby, with disgust. "It's so long since breakfast that I've forgotten what I had to eat."

"What do you want to eat, Tubby?" asked Frank, giggling.

"Not particular. Anything—from a marsh-

mallow cake to a tough steak," grunted the fat boy.

"Tubby wouldn't be as particular as the grouchy gentleman who went into the restaurant out West and ordered a steak," chuckled Dave. "After the waiter brought it the customer tried his knife on it and then called the waiter back.

"'Say!' he objected. 'This steak isn't tender enough.'

"'Not tender enough, stranger?' returned the cowboy waiter. 'What d'you expect? Want it to hug an' kiss yer?'"

When the laugh on Tubby had subsided Professor Skillings said, with a twinkle in his eye:

"Our friend, Blaisdell, should be able to exist some time on his accumulation of fat. He ought not to seriously suffer from hunger as yet."

"Like a camel living on its hump—eh?" said Wyn. "How about that, Tubby?"

"I'm no relation to a camel—I tell you that," snorted the fat boy, with disgust.

"Then Mr. Blaisdell might imitate some insects; mightn't he, Professor Skillings?" suggested Frank, with a sly look. "You know there are insects that live on nothing."

"On nothing?" exclaimed the professor, quickly. "Oh, no, young lady, you are mistaken. That is quite impossible."

"But, Professor! A moth lives on nothing; doesn't it?"

"No, indeed. How could that be?" cried the scientific gentleman, greatly perturbed by Frank's apparent display of ignorance.

"Why, moths eat holes; don't they?" chortled Frank. "Surely 'holes' are a pretty slim diet."

Professor Skillings led the laughter himself over this simple joke. But he added:

"I fear I should not be able to interest you in science, Frances."

"Not in summer, sir—oh, never!" cried Frank. "I refuse to learn a single, living thing until school opens again next fall."

In spite of Tubby's complaints, the canoeing party sighted Ware Island in good season for luncheon. This was a low, wooded spot around which the Wintinooski—split in two streams—flowed very quietly. The country on both sides was cut up into farms, with intervening patches of woods, dotted with ferns, and was very beautiful.

There was a little beach on one side of the island, with a green, shaded bank above. This was a favorite picnicking spot for parties from Denton; but our friends had the island all to themselves this day.

The girls had been as far as this island before

in their canoes; but never beyond. From this spot on the journey up the Wintinooski would be all new to Wyn Mallory and her chums.

The canoes were hauled up out of the water and the boys skirmished for fuel while the girls got out the luncheon. Ferd Roberts was fire-builder, and Grace, who hated that work, watched him closely, marveling how quickly and well he constructed the pyre and had a blaze merrily dancing among the sticks.

"Doesn't that beat all!" cried Grace. "You must love fires as much as Nero did."

"Nero? Let's see—he was the chap that always was cold; wasn't he?" queried Ferd, grinning.

"Nope!" broke in Frank. "That was Zero. You *will* get your ancient history mixed, Ferd!"

The luncheon was quickly laid, and Tubby was not the only one who did it justice. But Bessie Lavine continued to act disagreeably toward the boys. She was "forever nagging," as Dave said; and sometimes there was a spark of fire when she managed to get one or another of the boys "mad."

Professor Skillings wandered off with his bag and little geological hammer and Tubby rolled over on his back under a shady bush and went to sleep.

"Pig!" ejaculated Bess, in disgust. "That's all boys think of—their stomachs."

"Oh, don't be so hateful, Bess," advised Frank. "Come on; the rest of us are going to walk around a little to settle our luncheon, before tackling the paddles again."

"Humph! with the boys?" snapped Bess, seeing Wyn start off with Dave by her side. "Not me, thank you!"

"All right," chuckled Frank Cameron. "You can keep Tubby company."

But that suggestion made Bess even more angry, and she went off with her nose in the air, and all alone. But as the crowd of young folk came around the east end of Ware Island, they saw Bess standing upon the brink of a steep bank, under a small tree, where the water had washed out a good deal of the earth in a sort of cave beneath where she stood.

"Hi, Bessie! get back from there!" shouted Dave, warningly. "That place is likely to cave in."

"Then you certainly *would* get a ducking," added Frank.

"Pooh! I guess I know what I'm about," said the girl. "I'm no baby."

"You're acting like one," growled Dave. "That place is dangerous."

"It's not, Mr. Smartie!" cried Bess, and she stamped her foot in anger.

And just as though that had been the signal for which it had been waiting, several square yards of the steep bank, with the tree she was clinging to, slumped down into the river.

The girls screamed, while the boys bounded forward toward the spot where Bessie had disappeared.

"Oh, Dave!" cried Wyn. "Save her! save her! She can't swim very well. She will be drowned!"

CHAPTER VII

THE STORM BREAKS

DAVE SHEPARD, followed by the other "Busters," leaped down to the edge of the water before they came to the spot where the bank had caved. They feared that by tramping along the edge they might bring down even a greater avalanche than had fallen with the unfortunate Bessie.

"There she is, fellows!" cried Dave. "She's hanging to the tree!"

"I see her!" returned Ferd Roberts.

"Oh, Dave! we can't reach her," cried another of the Busters.

"I wish the professor was here," cried Ferd. "He'd know what to do."

"My goodness!" returned Dave, throwing off his coat and cap. "I don't need anybody to tell me what to do. *We've got to go after her!*"

He tore off the low shoes he wore, pitched them after his cap and coat, and leaped into the water. The current tugged hard at the end of

the island, and Bessie and the uprooted sapling were being carried out farther and farther into the stream.

The girl had not screamed. Indeed, she had been startled to such a degree when she went down that she had really not breath enough for speech as yet.

The boys were "right on the job," and only a few seconds elapsed from the moment the bank gave away until that in which Dave Shepard sprang into the river.

Some of the roots of the tree still clung to the shore. A part of the loosened earth had fallen upon these roots and so the tree was anchored. But Bessie was clinging to the bole of the sapling quite fifteen feet from the edge of the solid beach.

"Catch hold of hands, boys!" commanded Dave. "Make a chain! Give me one hand, Ferd! The current is tugging me right off my feet!"

His four mates obeyed orders promptly. Dave was captain of the Busters, as Wyn was of the Go-Ahead Club; and the boys had learned to obey their captain promptly—all but Tubby, at least. But Tubby was not in this exciting adventure at all, being asleep under the bush at their lunching place.

The fat boy was not even aroused when the crowd trooped back to the spot, boys and girls alike chattering like magpies. Dave and Ferd carried the dripping Bessie in "arm-chair" fashion and the girl who so disliked boys clung to her two chief rescuers with abandon.

They had hauled her out of the river just as she was losing her grasp on the tree. A moment later she might have been whirled down stream by the current and her life endangered. As it was, she had swallowed much water, and was just as wet inside and out as she would ever be in her life.

All the boys were more or less wet—Dave was saturated to his arm-pits. But the day was warm, and the boys were used to such duckings. It was another matter, however, with the girl. She was already shaking with an incipient chill.

"Wood on the fire, boys—get a lot of it," commanded Dave. "And get our blankets and let's put up a makeshift tent for Bess to use. She must get off her wet duds and wring them out and dry them. Hi! wake up that Tubby Blaisdell. We want his help."

Ferd proceeded to walk right over the fat youth on his way for more fuel and that effectually aroused the lad.

"Hey—you! what are you about?" yawned

Tubby. "Can't you find another place to walk on but *me,* Ferd Roberts?"

"I've got to walk *some*where," quoth Ferd.

"Why! you're all wet," gasped Tubby. "And so are you, Dave! And those other fellows—I declare!"

"Wake up and do something, Tubby," commanded Dave. "We want to get a tent up. There's been an accident, and Bessie Lavine is wetter than any of us. Let's have your knife."

"My—my knife?" yawned Tubby, rolling over slowly to reach into his breeches pocket.

This was too good a chance for Ferd to resist. Tubby was rolling near the edge of the bank as Ferd came back with his arms full of broken branches. Ferd put his foot against Tubby's back and pushed with all his might.

"Hi! Stop that! Ugh!"

Tubby rolled over once—he rolled over twice; then, with many ejaculations and bumps rolled completely down the slope, amid the laughter of the boys and girls above him.

Tubby missed the canoes—by good luck—and rolled with a splash into a shallow pool at the river's edge.

"You mean thing!" he yelled, getting up with some alacrity and shaking his fist at Ferd. "I—I'm all wet."

"So are we, Tubby," Dave said. "You belong to our lodge now. Come on up here with that knife of yours. Didn't I tell you I wanted to use it?"

The other boys were scurrying after stakes and blankets, while the girls fed the fire till it roared high, and Bessie stood in the heat of the flames.

"What do you think of the boys *now,* Bess?" Frank Cameron whispered in the victim's ear. "Some good—at times—eh?"

"Now, don't worry her, Frank," commanded Mina, the tender-hearted. "The poor, dear girl! See—she's just as wet as she can possibly be."

"Oh, and wasn't I scared!" gasped Bess, honestly. "When that bank went down I thought I was right on my way through to China! I did, indeed."

"I was so thankful Dave was there," said Wyn Mallory, thoughtfully. "You see, Dave is one of those dependable boys."

"I've got to admit it," gasped Bess. "He's some good. Why! he caught me just as I was slipping off that tree. I *can't* thank him!"

"Never mind," said Wyn, cheerfully. "It is decided, I guess, that the boys may be of some use to us this summer, after all."

"That's so, if we're all going to run the risk of drowning," Grace Hedges observed.

"I am going to learn to swim better," declared Bess. "I'll just put my t—time all in on *that*. But, oh, girls! I am so wet!"

"Tent's ready, ladies!" shouted Dave Shepard. "Make her take her clothing off, Wyn. We fellows will get the professor and go over to the other side of the island for a swim. Ferd and I have got to strip off and wring out our trousers, anyway. And I reckon Tubby is some wet."

"That's all right," grumbled the fat youth, waddling after his mates. "I'll pay Ferd out for that—you see!"

The boys were back in an hour and a half. By that time Bess had been made quite presentable, for her garments had been dried over the fire. However, the girls were dressed in a way to stand—as well as might be—such accidents as Bessie had met.

The girl who had declared boys no good frankly shook hands with Dave before they embarked again, and thanked him very prettily for his help in time of need.

"Go ahead! get a medal for me," said Dave. "Pin it right *there*," and he pointed to the lapel of his jacket. "I'm a hero. Keep on praising

me, Miss Lavine, and I'll grow as tall as a giraffe."

"And that's the highest form of animal life—ask the professor if it isn't," chuckled Frank Cameron.

But they were all very thankful that nothing serious had resulted from the accident. There was an after-result, however, that promised to be unpleasant. They had been so delayed at the island that it was half-past three before they got off. There was still a long stretch to paddle to Meade's Forge at the foot of Honotonka Lake.

And, swiftly as they paddled, the sun was setting when they arrived at the Forge. Besides, a heavy cloud was coming up, threatening a storm. Indeed, lightning was already playing around the horizon behind them.

There was no hotel at the Forge, and no good place to stop for the night. Mrs. Havel was out in her canoe waiting for them. Gannet Island, where the boys were to camp, was in sight, and the camping place the girls had had selected for them was even nearer.

"We had better go at once," said the professor, earnestly. "We will stop and help you erect your tents first——"

"No, you will not," returned Mrs. Havel. "The girls and I have got to learn to be inde-

pendent. Besides, your stores are waiting for you over there on the island, and I understand from the boatmen that the things are not yet under cover. You must hurry. We'll get along all right; won't we, girls?"

"Sure!" agreed Frank.

"We haven't come up here to be a burden on the boys, I hope," said Wyn, sturdily.

Wyn was captain, and as both she and Mrs. Havel thought they could get along all right, it was not for the other girls to object. The professor and the boys bade them good-bye and paddled away as fast as possible for the distant island. Even Tubby put forth some effort, for the thunderstorm was surely coming.

Tired as they were, the girls of the Go-Ahead Club made their paddles fly for another half-hour. Then they were in sight of a white birch, to the top of which was fastened a long streamer, like a pennant.

"There's the place!" cried Wyn, recognizing the signal that Polly Jarley had written to her about.

"And yonder is the boatman's place where our stores were left?" asked Mrs. Havel.

"Yes, ma'am."

"We cannot stop for anything now, and must depend for the night upon what we have with us.

I don't like the look of that cloud," said the lady.

None of the girls liked the look of it, either. It had now rolled up to the zenith—a leaden mass, looming over them most threateningly. And there was a rumble of thunder in the summer air.

"Oh! what a beautiful spot!" cried Percy.

"See that reach of lawn—and the thick grove behind it. Goodness me!" exclaimed Mina Everett, "do you suppose there are bears in that woods?"

"If there are, we'll catch 'em and eat 'em," said Frank, practically. "Now you know, Mina, there hasn't been a bear shot in this state since your grandfather's time."

"Well, then, if there's been none shot, maybe there are a lot grown up here in the woods," objected Mina.

"Don't scare a fellow to death with your croaking," admonished Percy.

Bessie had known that Polly Jarley had chosen the site for the camp; and she was secretly prepared to find fault with it. But as they drove their canoes ashore on the little, silvery beach below the green knoll where the pennant fluttered, Bess could find in her heart no complaint.

It seemed an ideal spot. On three sides the

thick woods sheltered the knoll of green. In front the lake lay like a mirror—its surface whitened in ridges 'way out toward the middle now, for the wind was coming.

"Hurry ashore, girls," said Mrs. Havel. "And pull your canoes well up on the sand. We must hurry to get our shelter up first of all. It will rain before dark, and the night is coming fast."

"Wish the boys had stopped to help us," wailed Grace.

"And let their own stores get all wet—eh?" cried Wyn. "For shame! Come on, girls. To the tent!"

There was a pile of canvas which had been dropped here by the bateau men on their way to Gannet Island that forenoon. There were stakes and poles with the canvas, and the girls had practised putting up the shelter and striking it for some weeks in Wyn's back yard.

They were not so clumsy at this work, therefore; but it did seem, because they were in a hurry, that everything went wrong.

Mina pounded her thumb with a stake-mallet, and the ridge pole fell once and struck Grace on the side of the head. Poor Grace was always unfortunate.

"Oh, dear me! I wish I was home!" wailed

the big girl. "And ouch! it's going to thunder and lightning just awful!"

"Now, keep at work!" admonished their captain. "Fasten those pegs down well, Frankie," she added, to the girl, who had taken the mallet. "Never mind crying over your poor thumb, Mina. Wait till the tent's up and all our things brought up from the canoes."

"Here come the first drops, girls!" shrieked Frankie.

Drops! It was a deluge! It came across the lake in a perfect wall of water, shutting out their view of Gannet Island and everything else.

The girls scuttled for the canoes, emptied them, turned the boats keel upward, and then retreated to the big tent, Wyn even dragging the canvas of the cook tent inside to keep it from becoming saturated.

Fortunately the last peg had been secured. The flap was laced down quickly. In the semi-darkness of the sudden twilight the girls and Mrs. Havel stood together and listened to the rain drum upon the taut canvas.

How it sounded! Worse than the rain on a tin roof! Peering out through the slit in the middle of the tent-flap they could see nothing but a gray wall of water.

Suddenly there was a glaring blue flash, fol-

lowed soon by the roar of the thunder. Several of the girls cried out and crouched upon the ground.

"Oh, dear me! this is awful!" groaned Grace again.

Mina Everett was sobbing with the pain in her thumb and her fear of the lightning.

"Now, this will never do, girls," admonished Wyn Mallory. "Come! we can set up the alcohol lamp and make tea. That will help some. There are crackers and some ham, and a whole big bottle of olives. Why! we sha'n't starve for supper, that's sure."

"I—I don't know as I want to eat," quavered Mina.

"Pshaw! We Go-Aheads must not be afraid of a little storm——"

Wyn's voice was drowned in the clap of thunder which accompanied an awful flash of lightning. With both came a splintering crash, the tent seemed to rock, and for a moment its interior was vividly illuminated by the electric bolt. The lightning had struck near at hand.

CHAPTER VIII

AT WINDMILL FARM

BOTH Wyn and Mrs. Havel—the bravest of the seven gathered in the big tent—were frightened by this awful shock. The other girls clung to them, Mina and Grace sobbing aloud.

"I—I feel as though that bolt fairly seared my eyeballs," groaned Frank Cameron. "Oh, dear! Here's another!"

But this flash was not so severe. The girls peered out of the slit in the front of the tent and screamed again in alarm. The rain had passed for the moment. There, not many rods away, stood an old, half-dead oak with its top all ablaze.

"That is where the lightning struck," cried Wyn.

"It is fortunate our tent was no nearer to that side of the plateau," observed Mrs. Havel.

Then the rain commenced again, and the thudding on the canvas drowned out their voices for a time.

Somehow Wyn managed to get supper. The thunder and lightning gradually subsided; but for

an hour the rain came in intermittent dashes and it was nine o'clock before they could venture forth into the cool, damp air.

They had eaten their simple meal and set up the sleeping cots (which were likewise of canvas) before that. There was a flooring of matched planks to be laid, too; but the rain had wet them and the girls would have to wait for to-morrow's sun to dry them.

"Oh! I don't believe living under canvas is going to be half so nice as we thought," complained Mina. "I never *did* think about its storming."

"A bad beginning makes a good ending," quoted Mrs. Havel, brightly. "This is only for one night."

"Excuse me! I don't want another like it, Auntie," declared her niece.

They could have no lamp to see to go to bed by, save Wyn's pocket electric flash.

"And it's so plaguey awkward!" cried Frankie. "Here one of us has to hold the snapper shut so the others can see. Here, Mina! I've played Goddess of Liberty long enough; *you* hold the lamp awhile."

Wyn slung a line from one end of the tent to the other, and on this they hung their clothes. All the girls were provided with warm pajamas

as being safer night garments under canvas than the muslin robes they wore at home.

"I *do* feel so funny," cried Percy, hopping into her own nest. "I can't curl my toes up in my nightgown—they stick right out at the bottom of these trousers!"

"And doesn't the grass tickle your feet?" cried Frank, dancing about between the cots. "My, my! this *is* camping out in real earnest. O-o-o! Here's a trickle of water running under the side of the tent, Wyn."

"You can thank your stars it isn't running through a hole in the tent right upon your heads," responded the captain. "Do get into bed, Frank."

Even Frank was quiet at last. The day had been a strenuous one. The muttering thunder in the distance lulled them to sleep. Soon the big white tent upon the knoll by the lake was silent save for the soft breathing of the girls and their chaperone.

And—odd as it may seem, considering the strangeness of their surroundings—all the girls slept soundly through the night. It was Wyn Mallory herself who first opened her eyes and knew, by the light outside, that it must be near sunrise.

Up she popped, stepping lightly over the cold

grass so as not to arouse her mates and Mrs. Havel, and reached the opening. She peered through. To the east the horizon was aglow with melting shades of pink, amber, turquoise and rose. The sun was coming!

Wyn snapped open the flap and ran out to welcome His Majesty. Then, however, she remembered that she was in pajamas, and glanced around swiftly to see if she was observed.

Not a soul was in sight. At that moment the first chorus of the feathered choir that welcomes the day in the wilds, had ceased. Silence had fallen upon the forest and upon the lake.

Only the lap, lap, lap of the little waves upon the shore was audible. The wind did not stir the tree branches. There was a little chill in the air after the storm, and the ground was saturated.

Wyn was doubtful about that "early morning plunge" in the lake that she had heard the boys talk about, and which she had secretly determined to emulate. But the boys' camp was at the far end of Gannet Island and she could not see it at all. She wondered if Dave and his friends would plunge into that awfully cold-looking water on this chilly morning?

To assure herself that the water *was* cold she ran down to where the canoes lay and poked one

big toe into the edge of the pool. Ouch! it was just like ice!

"No, no!" whispered Wyn, and scuttled up the bank again, hugging herself tight in both arms to counteract the chill.

But she couldn't go back to bed. It was too beautiful a morning. And all the others were sleeping soundly.

Wyn decided that she would not awaken them. But she slipped inside, selected her own clothing, and in ten minutes was dressed. Then she ran down to the pool again, palmed the water all over her face, rubbing her cheeks and forehead and ears till they tingled, and then wiped dry upon the towel she had brought with her.

Another five minutes and her hair was braided Indian fashion, and tied neatly. Then the sun popped up—broadly agrin and with the promise in his red countenance of a very warm day.

"Good-morning, Mr. Sun!" quoth Wyn, dancing a little dance of her own invention upon the summit of the green knoll that overhung the lake before the tent. "I hope you give us a fine day, and that we all enjoy it."

With a final pirouette she ran back to the tent. Still Mrs. Havel and the others slept.

"What lazy folk!" she told them, in a whisper, and then caught up a six-quart pail and ran

back through the open place and found the wood road that Polly had written her about.

She knew that to her left lay the way to the landing where Mr. Jarley kept his boats, and where their stores were under cover in a shed. But breakfast was the first consideration, and in the other direction lay Windmill Farm, at which Polly told her she had arranged for the Go-Aheads to get milk, fresh eggs, and garden vegetables.

So Wyn tripped along this right hand extension of the wood path and, within half an hour, came out of the forest upon the edge of the cleared farm. Before her lay sloping fields up, up, up to a high knoll, on the top of which stood a windmill, painted red.

The long arms of the mill, canvas-covered, rose much higher in the air than the gilt vane that glistened on the very peak of the roof. The rising sun shone full upon the windmill and made it a brilliant spot of color against the blue sky; but the wind was still and the sails did not cause the arms to revolve.

Just below the mill, upon the leisurely slope of the knoll, was set the white-painted farmhouse, with well-kept stables and out-buildings and poultry yards and piggery at the rear.

"What a pretty spot!" cried Wyn, aloud.

"And the woods are so thick between it and the lake that one would never know it was here."

She hurried on, for she knew by the smoke rising from the house chimney and the bustle of sound from the barnyard that the farmer and his family were astir.

Before she reached the side porch a number of cows, one with a bell on her neck leading the herd, filed out through the side yard and took a lane for the distant pasture. Horses neighed for their breakfasts, the pigs squealed in their sties and there was a pretty young woman singing at the well curb as she drew a great, splashing bucket of water.

"Oh! you're one of the girls Polly Jarley told us were coming to the lake to camp?" said the farmer's wife, graciously. "And did you get here in the storm last night? How do you all like it?"

"I can only answer for myself," declared Wyn, laughing. "They were all asleep when I came away. But I guess if we have nothing worse to trouble us than that shower we shall get along all right."

"You're a plucky girl—for a city one," said the woman. "Now, do you want milk and eggs?"

Wyn told her what she wanted, and paid for

the things. Then she started back to camp, laden with the brimming milk pail and a basket which the farmer's wife had let her have.

The sun was now mounting swiftly in his course across the sky. Faintly she heard the sawmill at the Forge blowing a whistle to call the hands, and knew that it was six o'clock. She hurried her steps and reached the opening where the tent was pitched just as the first sleepy Go-Ahead was creeping out to see what manner of day it might be.

"For goodness' sake, Wyn Mallory!" cried this yawning nymph in blue pajamas. "Have you been up all night?"

"Aren't you cute in those things, Percy?" returned Wyn. "You look just like a doll in a store window. Come on and dress. It's time you were all up. Why! the day will be gone before you know it."

"Oh—ow—ouch!" yawned Percy, and then jumped quickly through the opening of the tent because Grace Hedges pushed her.

"Why! the sun's up!" cried the big girl. "Why! and there's Wyn with milk—and eggs—and pretty red radishes—and *peas*. Mercy me! Look at all the things in this basket. Whose garden have you been robbing, Wyn?"

"Come on!" commanded the captain of the

Go-Ahead Club. "I brought a bag of meal in *my* canoe. And there is salt, and aluminum bowls, and spoons. We can make a good breakfast of eggs and mush. Hurry up, all you lazy folk, and help get breakfast."

"O-o-o! isn't the grass cold!" exclaimed one girl who had just stepped out from between woolen blankets.

"I—I feel as though I were dressing outdoors," gasped another, with chattering teeth. "D-don't you suppose anybody can see through this tent?"

"Nonsense, goosey!" ejaculated Frank. "Hurry up and get into your clothes. You take up more room than an elephant."

"Did you ever share a dressing room with an elephant, Frank?" demanded Bess.

"Not before," returned the thin girl, grimly. "But I am preparing for that experience when I try to dress in the same tent with Gracie."

But they were all eager to get outside when they sniffed the smoke of the campfire, and, a little later, the odor of eggs "frying in the pan." Despite the saturated condition of most of the underbrush Wyn knew where to get dry wood for fuel. Dave had long ago taught her that bit of woodcraft.

With a small camp hatchet she had attacked

the under branches of the spruce and low pine trees, and soon had a good heap of these dead sticks near the tent. She turned over a flat stone that lay near by for a hearth. Before the other girls and Mrs. Havel were dressed and had washed their faces at the lakeside, Captain Wyn was stirring mush in a kettle and frying eggs in pork fat in a big aluminum pan.

"Sunny side up; or with a veil of brown drawn over their beautiful faces, Frankie?" asked Wyn, referring to the sizzling eggs. "How do you like 'em?"

"I like 'em on toast—'Adam and Eve on a raft' Brother Ed calls 'em. And when he wants 'em scrambled he says, 'Wreck 'em!'"

"You'll get no toast this morning," declared Wyn. "You'll be satisfied with crackers—or go without."

"Cruel lady!" quoth Frank. "I expect I'll have to accept my yoke of eggs——"

"Only the *yolk* of the eggs, Frank?"

"No, I mean the pair I want," laughed Frankie. "And I'll take 'em without the toast and—'sunny side up.'"

"Good! I can't turn an egg without breaking it—never could. Now, girls! bring your plates. I'll flop a pair of eggs onto each plate. There's crackers in the box. Hand around your bowls.

The cornmeal mush is nice, and there is lovely milk and sugar if you want it. For 'them that likes' there is coffee."

"M-m-m! Doesn't it smell good?" cried Grace, as the party came trooping to the fire with their kits.

"I—I thought I'd miss the sweet butter," said Bess, sitting down cross-legged on the already dry grass. "But somehow I've got *such* an appetite."

"I hope the boys are having as good a time," sighed Wyn, sitting back upon her heels and spooning up her mush, flooded with the new milk. "Isn't this just scrumptious, Mrs. Havel?"

"It is the simple life," replied that lady, smiling. "Plenty of fresh air, no frills, plain food—that ought to do much for you girls this summer. I am sure if you can endure plain food and simple living for these several weeks before us, you will all be improved in both health and mind."

CHAPTER IX

JOHN JARLEY, EXILE

THIS could be no day of leisure for the Go-Ahead Club. To get settled in camp was the first task—and that no small one.

There was the plank flooring to be laid in the big tent, the cook-tent to be erected, and the floor laid in that. There was a sheet-iron stove to erect, with a smoke pipe to the outside, and an asbestos "blanket" to wrap around the pipe to keep the canvas of the tent-top from scorching.

There were the swinging shelves to put up, fastened to the ridge-pole of the cook-tent, on which certain supplies could be kept out of the reach of the wood mice and other small vermin. Indeed, there were a dozen and one things of moment to see about, beside bringing over to the camp a selection of the stores—and their extra clothes—from John Jarley's shack by the boat landing.

Wyn was a competent girl and knew something about using a hammer and a saw. The flooring planks for both tents had been assembled at

Denton, and were numbered; but after they got the sleepers laid Wyn realized that she and her mates had tackled more of a task than they had expected.

"And the boys will be just as busy as they can be to-day," she said to the other girls. "It's a wonder if everything they owned didn't get soaked last evening.

"Now, we can't depend upon the Busters to give us any assistance just now. Doubt if we see 'hide nor hair' of them to-day. But we need somebody to make these floors properly. There! Bess has stuck a splinter into her hand already."

"Plague take the old board!" snapped Bess, dropping it and sucking on a ragged little wound in her hand.

"You see," Wyn said, quickly. "I'm going to get some help. Anybody want to walk over to Jarley's with me?"

"Are you going to get that man to come here?" demanded Bess, sharply.

"Don't see what else there is to do—do you, Bessie?"

"Isn't there anybody else to help us around here? There must be other squatters."

"I do not know of any. We chance to know the Jarleys——"

"Not I!" cried Bess, shaking her head. "*I* don't know them—and I won't know them."

"All right. You and Grace and Percy take the pails and try for some berries in the woods yonder. I saw some ripe ones this morning. Fresh picked berries will add nicely to our bill-of-fare; isn't that so, Mrs. Havel?"

"Quite so, my dear," replied the widow, and buried herself in her book again, for, as she had told the girls, she had not come here to work; they must treat her as a guest.

"Are you going to stop with Mrs. Havel, Mina?" continued Wyn. "Then come along with me, Frank. We'll go over and see if the Jarleys bite. Bess is afraid they will!"

"She was telling us all about John Jarley," said Wyn's chum, as the two left the camp on the green knoll. "Do you suppose he stole that motor boat and the box of silver statuettes?"

"I don't *know* anything about it," said Wyn, briskly. "But I know that he and Polly are very poor, and with a motor boat and five thousand dollars' worth of silver, it looks to me as though they would be very foolish to suffer the privations they do. It's nasty gossip, that's all it is."

"Well, Bess says the man stole from her father years ago——"

"I don't know much about *that,* either," interrupted Wynifred. "But I think Bess is overstepping the line of exact truth when she says John Jarley stole from her father. They were doing business together, and Mr. Lavine accused Jarley of 'selling him out' in a real estate deal.

"I asked my father about it. Father says the whole business was a little misty, at best. If Jarley did all Lavine said, he merely was guilty of being false to his friend and partner. It is doubtful if he made much out of it. But Lavine talked loudly and long; he had lots of friends even then. The talk and all fairly hounded the Jarleys out of town.

"And now," said Wyn, warmly, "the Lavines are rich and the Jarleys have always been poor. Mr. Jarley is an exile from his old home and such friends as he had in Denton. It is really a shame, I think—and you'll say so, too, when you see what a splendid girl Polly is."

The two girls had followed the edge of the lake toward the landing, instead of taking the path through the wood. Suddenly they came in sight of the float and shack, with the several boats in Mr. Jarley's keeping.

Back from the shore was a tiny cottage, painted red, its window sash and door striped with yellow. It was a gay little cot, and everything about

it was as neat and as gaily painted as a Dutch picture.

As Wyn and Frank came down the hill they saw Polly Jarley run out of the house and down to the landing. Her father was busy there at an overturned boat—evidently caulking the seams.

The boatman's girl did not see her visitors coming; but Wyn and Frank got a good view of her, and the latter exclaimed to Wyn:

"Why! she's as pretty as a picture! She's handsome! If she only had on nice clothes she would be a perfect beauty."

"Wouldn't she?" returned Wyn, happily. "I think my Polly Jolly is just the *dearest* looking creature. Isn't she brown? And what pretty feet and hands she has!"

Polly wore a very short skirt, patched and stained. Her blouse was open at the throat, so that the soft roundness of the curve of her shoulder was plainly visible.

Out of the open neck of the blouse her deeply tanned throat rose like a bronze column; the roses in her cheeks and on her lips relieved the sun-darkened skin. Her hair was in two great plaits and it was evident that she seldom troubled about a hat. She was lithe, graceful as she could be, and bubbling over with good health if not good spirits.

And this was a morning—after the rain—to make even a lachrymose person lively. The smell of all growing things was in the nostrils—the warmth of the sun lapped one about like a mantle—it was a beautiful, beautiful day,—one to be remembered.

Wyn shouted and started running down the hill. Polly heard her, turned to see who it might be who called, and recognizing her friend, set out to meet her quite as eagerly.

"Oh, Miss Wynifred!" cried the boatman's daughter.

"Polly Jolly! This is Frank Cameron." She kissed Polly warmly. "How fine you look, Polly! Tell me! will all we girls look as healthy and be as strong as you are, by the autumn? You're a picture!"

"A pretty shabby one, I fear, Miss Wyn," protested Polly, yet smiling. "I am in the very oldest clothes I have, for there is much dirty work to be done around here. We have hardly got ready for the summer yet. Father has been so lame."

"And you must introduce me to your father, Polly," Wyn said, quickly. "We have something for him to do—if he will be so kind."

"All you need to do is to say what it is, Wynifred," responded Polly, warmly. "If either of

us can do anything for you we will only be too glad."

The three girls walked to the spot where Mr. Jarley was engaged upon his boat. He was not at all the sort of a person whom the girls from town had expected to see. The boatmen and woodsmen who sometimes drifted into Denton were rough characters. This man, after being ten years and more in the woods, savored little of the rough life he had followed.

He was a small man, very neat in his suit of brown overalls, with grizzled hair, a short-cropped gray mustache, and without color in his face save the coat of tan his out-of-door life had given him.

There was a gentle, deprecatory air about him that reminded Wyn strongly of Polly herself. But this manner was almost the only characteristic that father and daughter had in common.

Mr. Jarley was low-spoken, too; he listened quietly and with an air of deference to what Wyn had to propose.

"Surely I will come around and do all I can to aid you, Miss Mallory," he said. "You shall pick out the stores you think you will need, and we will take a boat around to your camp. Your stores will be perfectly safe here—if you wish to risk them in my care," he added.

"Of course, sir. And we expect to pay you for

keeping them. If we have a long spell of rainy weather the dampness would be bound to spoil things in our tents."

"True. This corrugated iron shack will keep the stores dry, and the door has a good padlock," returned Mr. Jarley. "Now, you young ladies pick out what you wish carried over to the camp and I will soon be at your service."

"Isn't he nice?" whispered Wyn to Frank, when Polly had run into the house for something, and Mr. Jarley himself was out of hearing.

"Why! he is a perfect gentleman!" exclaimed Frank. "How can Bess talk as she does about him? I am surprised at her."

"And these other people about here, too!" declared Wyn, warmly. "What an evil tongue Gossip has! That man—Shelton, is his name?—at the other end of the lake, who has accused Mr. Jarley of stealing his boat and the silver statues, ought to be punished."

"Well—of course—we don't *know* anything more about the Jarleys than these other people," observed Frank, doubtfully.

"I judge people by their appearance a good deal, I suppose," admitted Wyn. "And mother tells me that is a poor way to judge. Just the same, I *feel* that the Jarleys are being maligned. And I would love to help them."

"Well! there isn't much chance to do that unless you can prove that he *is* honest, after all," remarked Frank.

"I know it. Everything is going to tell against him unless the lost boat and the images can be found. I wonder where it was sunk? Do you suppose Polly would tell us just where the accident happened?"

"Ask her."

"I will, if I get a chance," declared Wyn. "And wouldn't it be fine if we girls could find the sunken boat and the box belonging to Dr. Shelton, and clear up the whole trouble?"

"Even *that* would not satisfy Bessie Lavine," said Frankie, with a little laugh. "You know—Bess is 'awful sot in her ways.' When she has made up her mind that a thing is so, you can't shake it out of her with a charge of dynamite!"

"You never tried the dynamite; did you, Frank?" queried Wyn, smiling.

"No! But I've wanted to—at times."

"Bessie is like her father—obstinate. It is a family trait. Yet, once get her turned around—show her that she has been wrong and unfair to anybody—and she can't do too much for her to prove how sorry she is."

"That's right! look how she talked against the boys—especially against Dave Shepard. And

now you can just wager she won't be able to do enough for him to show how grateful she is for being pulled out of the water," laughed Frank.

Mr. Jarley was ready to load the boat for them, and Polly came back with the key to the shack. Polly could not go over to the camp, for both she and her father could not leave the landing at once. Some fishermen might come along at any time to hire a boat. The season was opening now, and after the "lean months" that had gone by, the Jarleys had to be on the watch for every dollar that might come their way.

"It seems an awfully hard life for such a man —and for Polly," whispered Wyn to her companion. "I'd just *love* to have Polly for a member of our club."

"So would I," agreed Frank. "She's just as sweet as she can be. But Bess would go right up in the air!"

"Oh, I know it," sighed Wyn. "Somehow we have got to make Bessie Lavine see the error of her ways. Oh, dear! why can't people be nice to each other all the time?"

"Goodness me, Wyn Mallory!" exclaimed Frank. "What do you expect while there still remains 'original sin' in the world? That seems to have been left out of *your* constitution; but most of the rest of us have our share."

CHAPTER X

THE "HAPPY DAY"

THAT day the camp upon the hill overlooking Lake Honotonka was completed. Mr. Jarley was very helpful, for beside laying the floors of the two tents, and setting up the stove, he built for the girls an open-air fireplace of flat rocks, dragged up from the shore; set up their plank dining table, cut and set three posts for their clothes-line (for they were to do their own laundry work), dug shallow ditches all around the tents, with a drain to carry off any water that might collect; built an "overlook-seat" at the foot of a big birch which overhung the water, and did countless other little services which most of the Go-Ahead Club appreciated.

Bessie Lavine did not come back from the berrying expedition until Mr. Jarley had gone back to the landing; and of course she hadn't much to say about the change in the appearance of things. But the other girls were enthusiastic.

"And now we must have a name for the camp,"

said Mrs. Havel, as they sat down to the oilcloth-covered table to dinner.

The arrangements for cooking and eating were of the simplest; yet everything was neat. Using oilcloth saved laundry, and using paper napkins was likewise a help. The food was served daintily, if simply, and although all the girls were used to much finer table service at home, the hearty appetites engendered by the pure air of lake and forest made even coarse food taste delicious.

They were all instantly enthusiastic over their chaperone's suggestion. Half a dozen names were suggested on the spur of the moment; but no particular one met the approval of all the girls, immediately.

"We'll have to draw lots," suggested Mina.

"No! let's each write down the best names we can think of, and then vote on them," said Bess.

"Goody!" cried Frank. "We must have a name that fits, but is pretty and not too 'hifalutin',' as my grandmother would say."

"Naming the camp is all very well, girls," said Wyn, seriously, rapping on the table for order. "But there are more important things to decide. The work of the camp is to be properly apportioned——"

"Oh, dear me!" groaned Grace. "Have we *got* to work? After traipsing over four miles of

huckleberry pasture all the morning I feel as though I had done my share for to-day."

"And she ate as many as she picked!" cried Bess. "Oh, I'm going to tell on you, Miss! You're not going to crawl out of your fair share."

"I didn't enlist to work," declared Grace, with some sullenness. "What's the fun of camping out if one has to work like a slave all the time?"

"And we haven't even begun!" cried Frank. "For shame, Gracie!"

"Now, none of the members of the Go-Aheads, I feel sure," quoth Wyn, quietly, "will try to escape her just burden. To have the fun of camping out under canvas we must each do our share of the work quickly and cheerfully. We will divide up the tasks, and change them about weekly. Of course, Mrs. Havel is not supposed to lift her hand. She is our guest."

"Oh, but auntie is going to show us how to make pancakes," cried Percy.

"I'll learn to do *that,*" said Grace, brightening up. "For I love 'em."

"Of course—piggy-wiggy!" scoffed Bess. "Come, Wyn, you set us our tasks and any girl who kicks about 'em shall be fined."

"We'll do better than that. We will use Mina's idea of drawing lots about the work.

There are certain things to be done each week—each day, of course. Two girls must 'tend fires and cook; two girls must air and make beds, clean up about the tents, and wait on table if needed; the other two must get up early and go for the milk and vegetables, gather berries, and do odd jobs. The girls who do the 'chamber work' should wash the dishes, too, for the cooks will be too tired and heated after preparing the meals to clean up the tables and mess with the dish-washing.

"Now are those three divisions satisfactory? Every third week, you see, the two who go for the milk, etcetera, will have an easy job. Is it agreed?"

There was no objection raised to this plan, and the girls paired off as they usually did—Wyn and Frank together, Grace and Percy, and Bess and Mina.

Then they drew straws—really grass blades of three lengths—to see which couple should do which. It fell to the lot of Bess and Mina to cook for a week. Grace and Percy Havel were "chambermaids," and Wyn and Frank Cameron had the good luck to get the shortest blade of grass.

"Of course, *I'd* have to work hard two weeks before getting a chance to rest," grumbled Grace.

"Probably something will happen after we're here a fortnight, and we'll all have to go home."

"It would take something *awful* to send me home from this beautiful spot in a fortnight," cried Mina.

"Just my luck if you all got smallpox, or something equally contagious," growled Grace.

"Then you certainly would be fortunate for once—if you escaped it," chuckled Wyn.

"Not a bit of it. They'd quarantine you here, and have nurses, and lots of nice jellies and ices for you; while poor unlucky me would be packed back to Denton for the rest of the summer—and after working like a slave, dishwashing, and sweeping, and making beds, and cooking, and the like, for two whole weeks."

Despite Grace's complaints, the club as a whole was satisfied with the arrangements for taking care of the camp. There had been a secondary consideration in the minds of all their mothers when permission was obtained for the Go-Aheads to spend the summer under canvas. Mrs. Evelyn Havel was a wondrously good housekeeper. She had been trained in domestic science, too. And she had promised to have an oversight of each girl's work and to teach them, from time to time, many helpful domestic things.

This phase of the camping-out plan Wyn had

"played up" in getting the consent of all the parents; and for one, Wyn was determined to carry the scheme through. When they went back to Denton in the fall she proposed to be a good "plain cook" herself, and she hoped the other girls would fall in cheerfully with the project also. She knew Mrs. Havel would do all she could toward teaching them.

The work once apportioned to them, the girls' minds could be given more particularly to the naming of the camp. But they would not decide upon it until bedtime. However, all six cudgeled their brains to invent striking names.

It was decided that only one name could be suggested by each girl, and this would give them a list of six to choose from. Oddly enough both Mina and Grace chose the same—Camp Pleasant. It looked as though *that* name had a lead at the start.

Frank suggested Birch Tree Camp—for there was an enormous birch on the knoll at the foot of which Mr. Jarley had set up a bench for them.

"Now you, Bess?" said Wyn, as mistress of ceremonies.

"Camp Pleasant is all right," admitted Miss Lavine; "only it is not very distinctive. I expect there are thousands of Camp Pleasants—don't you think so?"

"What's the matter with *my* name?" demanded Frank Cameron.

"I find the same fault with it," replied Bess. "It is not distinctive enough. Now, I don't know that I have the right idea; but I believe that calling the camp after our club wouldn't be so bad. And it would mean something."

"Go-Ahead Camp? Or Camp Go-Ahead?" cried Grace.

"There's nothing romantic about it, that's sure," objected Mina.

"Goodness me! we're not looking for romance, I hope," cried the strong-minded Bess.

"Bess is a suffragette in embryo—I declare!" cried Frank, laughing.

"How does Camp Cheer sound?" suggested Percy. "Now, that's real nice, *I* think."

"Say, we've got to vote on them, anyway," said Grace. "*We've* got two votes for Camp Pleasant, Mina."

"But hold on!" cried Frank. "Here's one hasn't been heard from. The shrinking violet of all our crew! What's the matter, Wynnie? Can't you decide on a name?"

"I thought of one last evening when we were paddling over here from the Forge—before the rain," admitted the captain.

"Well! for pity's sake!" gasped Grace.

"That's before we even knew it was to have a name."

"I didn't think particularly about naming the camp," said Wyn, reflectively, "but from the water, with the squall working up behind us, and the last light of the day lingering on this little hill, the name flashed into my mind."

"What is it?" chorused the others. "Do tell us, Wyn!"

"Green Knoll."

"Just *that?*" cried Grace. "'Green Knoll'? Why! It *was* green; wasn't it?"

"I remember how green it seemed from the lake," added Bess. "It's not a silly name, either. It means something."

"I take it all back about 'Birch Tree Camp,'" declared Frank. "'Green Knoll.' There's a dignity about that—as our assistant principal, Miss Hutchins, would say."

"It's a fine name, *I* think," admitted Percy Havel, slowly. "I withdraw Camp Cheer. It may not be so cheerful here all the time—especially if we catch smallpox, as Grace says. But it will *always* be green up here on the knoll."

"As long as we are here to see it, at least," agreed Frankie, nodding.

"Say! our Camp Pleasant is swamped!" cried

Grace. "What say, Mina? Shall we surrender?"

"Green Knoll sounds very pretty," agreed the sweet-tempered Mina Everett.

"Oh, girls! do you really all like it?" Wyn cried.

"I vote aye!" said Frank, with emphasis. The other four followed in quick succession.

"Why, that's lovely of you!" cried the captain of the club. "I—I was afraid nobody would like it but myself."

"It's so appropriate," said Bess.

"It's all *right,*" Frank declared. "I wonder what the Busters will call their camp?"

"They named it last fall," said Wyn. "Dave told me. It is Cave-in-the-Wood Camp. Not so bad—eh?"

"Pretty good for a parcel of boys," observed Bess.

"Well, I'm glad the worry's over," yawned Grace. "Let's go to bed. You know, Percy, we've got to work like slaves to-morrow, so it behooves us to get to bed betimes."

"Mercy!" cried Frankie, "they'll be wanting to make up the cots before we are out of them in the morning. Come on! let's all turn in."

There was a general roll-call at daybreak the next morning. Wynifred and Frank were not the

only ones to get up as soon as day approached, although to them had been allotted the task of going to Windmill Farm for the milk and the day's supply of vegetables.

They had agreed the night before to venture into the water. The boys always bragged about this early morning dip, which was a rule of their camp.

"I don't see why we shouldn't be able to do anything those boys do," declared Bess, with her usual contempt for the vaunted superiority of the other sex. "If they can run down and plunge right into the water, right out of bed, why can't *we?*"

So even Grace—who had her doubts about it—ventured on this second morning. They slipped out of their sleeping clothes and into bathing suits. There *was* a little chill in the air; but Wyn assured them the water would be warmer than the air and —if they remained in half an hour, or so—the sun would be up and his rays would warm them when they came out.

And Wyn's prophecy was proven right. The six girls disported in the lake like a flock of ducks. Mrs. Havel, however, would not let them remain more than twenty minutes. The sun had shot up, then, and already the green knoll was warm in his first rays.

Wyn and Frank scurried into their clothes and hurried away to the farm for the milk and vegetables. Frank saw the windmill on the summit of the hill, and nothing would do but she must run up and inspect it. The breeze was rising and the farmer, who was likewise the miller, was preparing to "grind a grist."

"We've got a good bit of grain on hand; but we've not had wind enough of daytimes lately to grind a handful," he said. "I can't invite you inside, young ladies, because when they set up this mill for me they made the door, as you see, right behind the sails. When the arms are in motion I am shut in till the grist is ground; or I stop the sails with this lever just inside the door—d'ye see?"

As the girls went back toward the house the arms began turning with a groaning sound. The wind became fresher. Round and round the long arms turned, while the canvas bellied like the sails on a boat.

Louder and louder grew the hum of the mill. The miller threw in the clutch and the stones began to grind. They heard the corn poured into the hopper, and then the shriek of the kernels as they were ground between the stones. The whole building began to shake.

"What a ponderous thing it is!" exclaimed

Frank. "And see! there's a tiny window in the roof facing the lake. I imagine you could see clear to Meade's Forge from that window."

"Farther than that, my dear—much farther," said the farmer's wife, handing Frank the basket of fresh vegetables over the garden fence. "On a clear day you can see 'way across the lake to Braisely Park. The tower of Dr. Shelton's fine house is visible from that window. And the whole spread of the lake. But the air must be very clear."

"Goody! We'll bring the other girls up here some day when the mill is not running and climb to the top of the mill for the view," declared Frank.

Bess and Mina, with some advice from Mrs. Havel, made a very good breakfast. Although neither was very domestic in her tastes, the two young cooks were on their mettle, and did the best they could. If the hot biscuits were not quite so flaky as their mothers' own cooks made them at home, and some of the poached eggs broke in the poacher, and the broiled bacon got afire several time and "fussed them all up," as Mina said, the general opinion of the occupants of Green Knoll Camp was that "there was no kick coming" —of course, expressed thus by the slangy Frank Cameron.

Grace *would* dawdle over the dishwashing, and Percy was a good second. Therefore, those two still had work on their hands when Bess sighted a motor boat coming swiftly toward their camp from the direction of Gannet Island.

"Now somebody's going to butt in and bother us," declared Bess. "It can't be the Busters, I s'pose?"

"That's exactly who it is!" cried Wyn, delightedly. "That's the *Happy Day*. Dave said if his cousin, Frank Dumont, could come up here, he would bring his father's motor boat. And he must have come yesterday when we were busy and did not see him."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank. "A motor boat beats a canoe all to pieces."

"The Busters are aboard, all right," sighed Bess, after another look. "Now we'll have a noisy time."

"Now there'll be something doing!" quoth Frank. "That's the trouble with a crowd of girls. After they have played 'Ring Around the Rosy' and 'London Bridge is Falling Down' they don't know another living thing to do except to sit down and look prim and be prosy. But with boys it's different. There's something doing all the time."

"You should have been a boy, Frank," declared Bess, with some disgust.

"If I was one, I'd be hanging around your house all the time, Bessie mine," laughed the other, hugging the boy-hater.

"Get away! I'd have Patrick turn the hose on you if you did!" cried Bess, in mock wrath.

But secretly, Miss Lavine, as well as her mates, was glad of the break in the quiet affairs of Green Knoll Camp made by the appearance of Dave Shepard and his spirited chums.

"Oh, crackey, girls! you ought to see our camp! We've got a regular pirates' cave," declared Ferdinand Roberts.

"Did your stores get wet in that awful storm?" demanded Wyn from the top of the knoll.

"Not much. We managed to cover them with the canvas. And now we've cleaned out the cave and it's great. All we need is some captives to take over there and chain to the rocks," laughed Dave.

"And fatten 'em up till they're fit to eat," drawled Tubby Blaisdell.

"Stop it, Tub!" cried one of his mates. "We're not going to play cannibals, but pirates."

"Well, in either case," declared Bess, "you will not get captives at Green Knoll Camp."

"Is that what you call this pretty hillock?"

cried Dave. "Well, it *is* a beauty spot! And how nice you girls have made everything. Why! you don't need any boys around at all."

"That's what I've always told them," murmured Bess. "They're only a nuisance."

"We came over to see if we could help you," continued Dave. "Here's my cousin, Frank Dumont, girls. Some of you know him, anyway. This is his motor boat, and if there really is nothing we can do to help you here, why, Frank wants to take you all—with Mrs. Havel, if she is agreeable—for a trip around the lake. We've got supplies aboard and we'll stop somewhere and make a picnic dinner."

"Goody!" cried Mina. "Then we will not have to make dinner here, Bess."

"Agreed!" announced Grace. "There will be no more dishes to wash until evening, then."

"Well, I don't know," Dave said, slowly. "Of course we like to have you girls go along; but usually girls do the grub-getting and dish-washing on a picnic."

"Nothing doing, then," declared Frank, laughing at him. "This crowd of girls are going as invited guests, or not at all. We promise to be ornamental, but not useful."

"You're ornamental, all right, in those blouses and bloomers," declared Ferd, for the girls had

discarded skirts about the camp, and felt much more free and comfortable than they usually did.

"If worse comes to worst," said Mrs. Havel, smiling, "*I* will be the camp drudge, boys, for I want to see the lake shore in panorama."

"Oh, let 'em come," drawled Tubby, still lying on his back on the little deck of the *Happy Day.* "They'll get hungry some time and *have* to cook for us."

And so, amid much bustle, and laughter, and raillery, the girls of Green Knoll Camp joined the boys of Cave-in-the-Wood Camp in the motor boat for a trip around the big lake.

CHAPTER XI

WHERE THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED

"AND where is Professor Skillings?" asked Mrs. Havel, as the well-laden launch drew away from the little natural landing which defended one end of the girls' bathing beach at Green Knoll Camp.

"Bless your heart, ma'am," said Ferdinand Roberts, laughing, "the old gentleman is trying to figure out one of Tubby's unanswerable arguments—that is, I believe, what you'd call it."

"One of Tubby's unanswerable arguments?" cried Wyn. "For pity's sake! what can that be?"

"Why, at breakfast this morning the professor got to 'dreaming,' as he sometimes does. He tells us lots of interesting things when he begins talking that way; but sometimes, if we are in a hurry to get away, we have to put the stopper in," chuckled Ferd.

"Tubby usually does it. Tubby really *is* good for something beside eating and sleeping, girls—you wouldn't believe it!"

"You *do* surprise us," admitted Bess Lavine, cuttingly.

"All right. But just wait and listen. We wanted to get away early and come over here after you," said Ferd. "And the professor began to give us one of his talks. This time it was on literature. By and by he says:

"'We are told that it took Gray, author of "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," seven years to write that famous poem.'

"'Gee!' exclaimed Tubby. 'If he'd only known stenography how much better off he'd been.'

"'Ahem! how do you prove that, Mr. Blaisdell?' inquired the professor, quite amazed.

"'Why, we took that as a lesson in the shorthand class of the Commercial Department last spring,' said Tubby, 'and some of the real good ones could do Gray's Elegy, from dictation, in seven minutes. See what Gray would have saved if he'd known shorthand!'

"And that completely shut up the professor," said Ferd, as the laughter broke out. "He hasn't recovered from the shock yet."

The *Happy Day* was turned toward the Forge first, skirting the shore all the way. That brought them, of course, close to Jarley's Landing. Polly was just pushing out in a little skiff.

Wyn and Frank waved to her; but the other girls did not know her, of course, and only watched the boatman's daughter curiously.

"How well she rows!" exclaimed Percy.

"Say! but she's a fine looking girl," said Dave, earnestly. "What handsome arms she's got."

"Handsome is as handsome does," remarked Bess, snappishly.

"She's as brown as an Indian," observed Mina.

"That doesn't hurt her," declared Dave, stoutly. "Is *she* the girl you were speaking about, Wyn?"

"She is Polly Jarley, and she is my friend," responded Wynifred, quietly. "And I believe her to be as good as she is beautiful."

"Then there are wings sprouting under her blouse," laughed Frank; "for there's no girl *I* ever saw who could hold a candle to Polly for right down beauty."

"She looks so sad," said Mina, softly.

"Why shouldn't she be sad?" Wyn demanded, "with everybody talking about her father the way they do?"

"Come, girls!" commanded Mrs. Havel. "Don't gossip. Find some other topic of conversation."

"Ha! quite so," cried Frank, with a grimace upon her own homely face. "A girl may be as

pretty as a picture and spoil it all by an ugly frame of mind. How's *that* for a spark thrown from the wheel?"

"Stand back, audience!" exclaimed Dave. "Something like that is likely to happen any minute."

"I don't really see how the old professor gets on with you boys at all," remarked Bessie Lavine, with a sigh. "You'd worry the life out of an angel."

"But Professor Skillings is *not* an angel—thanks be!" exclaimed Dave.

"He's a good old scout!" drawled Tubby.

"He just hasn't forgotten what it is to be a boy," began Ferd.

"But, goodness me!" cried Frankie. "He's forgotten about everything else, at some time or other; hasn't he?"

"Not what he's learned out of books and from observation," declared Dave. "But my goodness! he *is* absent-minded. Yesterday a couple of us fellows chopped up a good heap of firewood. We don't have a fancy stove like you girls, but just an out-of-doors fireplace. After supper the dear old prof. said he'd wash the dishes, and we dumped all the pots and pans together and—what do you think?"

"Couldn't think," drawled Frank. "I'm too

lazy. Tell us without making your story so complicated."

"Why, we found he had carried an armful of firewood down to the shore and was industriously swashing the sticks up and down in the water, thinking he was washing the supper dishes."

With similar conversation, and merry badinage, the journey around Lake Honotonka progressed. The shores of the lake, in full summer dress, were beautiful. There was an awning upon the motor boat, so the rapidly mounting sun did not trouble the party. But it *was* hot at noonday, and through Dave's glasses they could see that the sails on the mill behind Windmill Farm were still. There wasn't air enough stirring, even at that height, to keep the arms in motion, and down here on the water the temperature grew baking.

They ran into a cool cove and went ashore for dinner. Nobody wanted anything hot, and so, as there was a splendid spring at hand, they made lemonade and ate sandwiches of potted chicken and hard-boiled eggs which the boys had been thoughtful enough to bring along. The girls had crisp salad leaves to go with the chicken, too, and some nice mayonnaise. Altogether even Tubby was willing to pronounce the "cold bite" satisfying.

"And I'm no hypocrite," declared the fat youth, earnestly. "When I say a thing I mean it."

"What *is* your idea of a hypocrite, Tubby?" demanded Wyn, laughing.

"A boy who comes to school smiling," replied Tubby, promptly.

After a while a little breeze ruffled the surface of the lake again and the *Happy Day* was made ready for departure. They continued then toward the west, where lay the preserve known as Braisely Park, in which there were at least a dozen rich men's lodges. They were all in sight from the lake—at some point, at least. Each beautiful place had a water privilege, and the landings and boathouses were very picturesque. There was a whole fleet of craft here, too, ranging in size from a cedar canoe to a steam yacht. The latter belonged to Dr. Shelton, the man who had accused John Jarley of stealing the motor boat *Bright Eyes* and the five thousand dollars' worth of silver images from the ruined temples of Yucatan.

"And of course," said Wyn, warmly, "that is nonsense. For if Polly and her father had done such a thing, they would turn the silver into money; wouldn't they, and stop living in poverty?"

"Well, it looks mighty funny where that boat and all could have gone," Bessie remarked.

"If she sank as quickly as he says, the wreck must lie off Gannet Island somewhere," remarked Dave, reflectively.

"Oh! I wish we could find it," commented Wyn.

"If it ever sank at all," sneered Bessie.

But it was almost impossible to quarrel with Wyn Mallory. Frank would have "got hot" a dozen times at Bess while the party chanced to discuss the Jarleys and their troubles. But the captain of the Go-Ahead Club was patient.

Bye and bye—and after mid-afternoon—the *Happy Day* came around to the west end of Gannet Island. Up among the trees a glint of white betrayed the presence of the boys' tent. In a little sheltered cove below the site of Cave-in-the-Wood Camp, danced the fleet of canoes.

Nothing would do but the girls and Mrs. Havel must go ashore and see the cave and the camp.

"And we can have tea," said Ferd. "How's that, girls? Professor Skillings has got a whole canister of best gunpowder in his private stores—and there he is on that log, examining specimens."

"Oh, dear me!" cried Frankie, "tea isn't going to satisfy the gnawing of *my* appetite."

"How about a fish-fry?" demanded Dave,

swerving the motor boat suddenly away from the landing.

"Where'll you get your fish?" cried Percy Havel.

"In the fish store at Meade's Forge," scoffed Ferdinand Roberts.

"That's too far to run for supper—and back again—this afternoon, boys," said Mrs. Havel.

"Just you wait," cried Dave. "I caught sight of something just now—there she is!"

The *Happy Day* rounded a wooded point of the island. Near the shore floated Polly Jarley's skiff and Polly was just getting up her anchor.

"She's been fishing all day!" exclaimed Wyn.

"And I'll wager she's got a fine mess of perch," said Dave. "Hi, Miss Jarley!" he shouted. "Hold on a minute."

Polly had heard the chugging of the motor boat. Now she stood up suddenly and waved both hands in some excitement.

"What does she want?" demanded Bess.

"Get out! farther out!" the boatman's daughter shouted, her clear voice echoing from the wooded heights of the island. "Danger here!"

"What's the matter with her?" demanded Bess again. "Is there a submarine mine sunk here?"

But Dave veered off, taking a wider course from the shore.

"What is the matter, Polly?" shouted Wyn, standing up and making a megaphone of her hands.

"Snags!" replied the other girl. "Here's where father ran Dr. Shelton's boat on a root. The shallow water here is full of them. Look out."

"Say!" cried Frank Dumont. "We don't want to sink the old *Happy Day*."

"So *this* is where the accident happened; is it?" observed Wyn, looking around at the shores of the little cove and the contour of the island's outline.

"Humph!" snapped Bessie Lavine, sitting down quickly. "I don't believe there was any accident at all. It was all a story."

CHAPTER XII

AN OVERTURN

DAVE SHEPARD had stopped the motor boat and now he hailed the pretty girl in the skiff.

"I say, Miss Jarley! did you have any luck?"

"I've got a good string of white perch. They love to feed among these stumps," returned Polly.

"Oh, Polly Jolly! sell us some; will you?" cried Wyn, eagerly. "We're *so* hungry."

"Do, do!" chorused several of the other girls and boys aboard the *Happy Day*.

Polly, smiling, held up a long withe on which wriggled at least two dozen silvery fish. "Aren't they beauties?" she demanded. "Wait! I'll row out."

She had already raised her anchor. Now she sat down, seized the short oars, and plunged them into the water. How she could row! Even Bessie Lavine murmured some enthusiastic praise of the boatman's daughter.

Her skiff shot alongside the motor boat. She caught the gunwale, and then held up the string of fish again.

"How much, Miss Jarley?" asked Dave.

"Half a dollar. Is that too much?"

"It looks too little; but I suppose you know what you can get for them at the Forge," he said.

"And this saves me rowing down there," returned the brown girl, smiling and blushing under the scrutiny of so many eyes.

Wyn leaned over the rail, took the fish, and kissed Polly on her brown cheek.

"Dreadfully glad to see you, dear," she declared. "Won't you come over to the camp tomorrow and show us girls where—and how—to fish, too? We're crazy for a fishing trip."

"Why—if you want me?" said Polly, her fine eyes slowly taking in the group of girls aboard the motor boat.

All looked at her in a friendly way save Bessie, and she had her back to the girl.

"I'll come," said Polly, blushing again; and then she pocketed the piece of money Dave gave her, and pushed off a bit.

"Is this really where your father came so near losing his life, Polly?" asked Wyn, seriously.

"Yes, Miss Wyn. Right yonder. It was so thick he could not see the shore. A limb of that tree yonder—you can see where it was broken off; see the scar?"

There was a long yellow mark high up on the

tree trunk overhanging the pool where Polly had been fishing.

"That limb brushed father out of the boat just as she struck. The snag must have torn a big hole in the bottom of the *Bright Eyes*. Lightened by his going overboard, she shot away—somewhere—toward the middle of the lake, perhaps. He knows that he gave the wheel a twirl just as he went overboard and that must have driven the nose of the boat around.

"She shot away into the fog. He never saw or heard of her again. We paddled about for a week afterward—the bateau men and I—and we couldn't find it. Poor father was abed, you see, for a long time and could not help."

"All a story, *I* believe," whispered Bess, to Mina.

"Oh, don't!" begged the tender-hearted girl.

Perhaps Polly heard this aside. She plunged her oars into the water again and the skiff shot away. She only nodded when they sang out "Good-bye" to her.

The *Happy Day* carried the party quickly back to the cove under the hill on which Cave-in-the-Wood Camp had been established. The girls and boys landed and were met by Professor Skillings—who could be a very gallant man indeed, where ladies were concerned. He helped Mrs. Havel

out of the motor boat, which Dave had brought alongside of a steep bank, where the water was deep, and which made a good landing place.

"My dear Mrs. Havel! I am charmed to see you again," said the professor. "You are comfortably situated over there on the shore, I hope?"

"My girls are as successful in making me comfortable as are your boys in looking after you, I believe, Professor Skillings," returned the lady, laughing.

"More so—I have no doubt! More so," admitted the professor.

"Treason! treason!" shouted Dave Shepard.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Wyn, who had hopped ashore behind the chaperone.

"Professor Skillings is going back on us, boys," declared Dave.

"Why, Professor!" cried Ferdinand. "Where would you find in all the five zones such a set of boys as we-uns?"

"Five zones? Correct, my boy," declared the professor, seriously. "But name those five zones; will you, please?"

"Sure!" wheezed Tubby, before Ferd could reply. "Temperate, Intemperate, Canal, Torrid, and Ozone."

"Goodness gracious, Agnes!" gasped Dave.

"Can you beat Tubby when he lays himself out to be real erudite?" while the others—even the professor and Mrs. Havel—could not forbear to chuckle.

But Dave and Ferd got busy at once while the others laughed, and chaffed, and looked over the boys' camping arrangements. Dave was cook and Ferd made and fed the fire. These boys had all the approved Scout tricks for making fire and preparing food—they could have qualified as first-class scouts.

Ferd started for an armful of wood he had cut down at the bottom of the steep bank and suddenly, without any warning whatsoever, he slipped, his feet pointed heavenward, and he skated down the bank upon the small of his back.

"My goodness me!" exclaimed Frank Cameron. "Did you see that?"

"Sure," said Dave, amid the laughter of the crowd. "Poor Ferdy! the whole world is against him!"

"You bet it is," growled Ferd, picking himself up slowly at the bottom of the bank. "And it's an awful hard world at that."

"Come on! Come on!" whined Tubby Blaisdell. "Aren't you ever going to get supper? You're wasting time."

Dave was expertly cleaning fish. Wyn ran to his

help, finding the flour, cracker-crumbs, and salt pork. The pan was already heating over the blaze that the unfortunate Ferdinand had started in the fireplace.

"If you're so blamed hungry," said Dumont to the wailing Tubby, "start on the raw flour. It's filling, I'll be bound."

"Say! I don't just want to get filled. I want to enjoy what I eat. I could be another Nebuchadnezzar and eat grass, if it was just *filling* I wanted."

"Ha!" cried Dave. "Tubby is as particular as the Western lawyer—a perfectly literal man—who entered a restaurant where the waiter came to him and said:

"'What'll you 'ave, sir? I 'ave frogs' legs, deviled kidneys, pigs' feet, and calves' brains.'

"'You look it,' declared the lawyer man. 'But what is that to me? I have come here to eat—don't tell me your misfortunes.'"

Amid much laughter and chaffing they finally sat down to the fish-fry—and if there is anything more toothsome than perch, fresh from the water, and fried crisply in a pan with salt pork over the hot coals of a campfire, "the deponent knoweth not," as Frank Cameron put it.

Then Tubby got his banjo, Dumont his mandolin, Dave his ocarina, and they sang, and played, and told jokes, until a silver crescent moon rising

over the lake warned them that the hour was growing late. The feminine visitors then boarded the *Happy Day* and under the escort of Dave and Ferdinand to work the boat, the girls and their chaperone made the run back to Green Knoll Camp, giving the cove where Polly Jarley had caught the perch a wide berth.

Dave insisted upon going ashore at Green Knoll and searching the camp "for possible burglars," as he laughingly said.

"Do, *do* look under my bed, Dave!" squealed Frank, in mock distraction. "I've always expected to find a man under my bed."

"But it was real nice of him, just the same," admitted Mina Everett, when the *Happy Day* had chugged away. "I feel a whole lot better now that he has beaten up the camp."

On the next morning Grace and Percy were not allowed to lag over the breakfast dishes till all hours.

"This shall be no lazy girls' camp," declared Mrs. Havel. "The quicker you all get your tasks done, the better. Then you can have games, and go fishing, and otherwise enjoy yourselves."

The fish-fry they had enjoyed at Cave-in-the-Wood Camp the evening before had given them all an appetite for more, and as Polly Jarley appeared early, according to promise, Wyn began

to bustle around and hunt out the fishing tackle.

There probably wasn't a girl in the crowd who was afraid to put a worm on a hook, save Mina. She owned up to the fact that they made her "squirmy" and she hated to see live bait on a hook.

"But that's what we have to use for lake fish —or river fish, either," Wyn told her. "You're not going to be much good to this fishing party."

"I know it, Wynnie. And I sha'n't go," said the timid one. "Mrs. Havel is not going fishing, and I can stay with her."

"You'll have company," snapped Bessie Lavine. "I'm sure *I'm* not going," and she said it with such a significant look at Polly Jarley, who had come ashore, that the boatman's daughter, as well as the other girls, could not fail to understand *why* she made the declaration.

"Why, Bess Lavine!" exclaimed Frankie, the outspoken.

Polly's face had flushed deeply, then paled. Bess had avoided her before; but now she had come out openly with her animosity.

"Is your name Miss Lavine?" asked the boatman's daughter, her voice quivering with emotion.

"What if it is?" snapped Bess.

"Then I guess I know why you speak to me so——"

"Don't flatter yourself, Miss! I don't care to speak to you," said Bess.

"Nor do I care to have anything to do with you," said Polly, plucking up a little spirit herself under this provocation. "You are Henry Lavine's daughter. I am not surprised at your speech and actions. He has done all he could to hurt my father's reputation for years—and you seem to be just like him."

"Hurt your father's reputation—Bosh!" cried Bess. "You can't spoil a——"

But here Wyn Mallory came to the rescue.

"Stop, Bess! Don't you pay any attention to what she says, Polly. If this quarrel goes on, Bess, I shall tell Mrs. Havel immediately. You come with us, Polly; if Bessie doesn't wish to go fishing, she can remain at camp. Come, girls!"

Bess and Mina remained behind.

"I told you how 'twould be, Miss Wyn," said Polly, her eyes bright and hard and the angry flush in her cheek making her handsomer than ever. "I shall only make trouble among your friends."

"You don't notice any of the rest of us running up the red flag; do you?" interposed Frank Cameron. "Bess's crazy."

"The Lavines have been our worst enemies—worse than Dr. Shelton," said Polly, with half a

sob. "Mr. Lavine is up here at the lake in the spring and fall, usually, and he will always talk to anybody who will listen about his old trouble with father. And he is an influential man."

"Don't you cry a tear about it!" exclaimed Frank, wiping her own eyes angrily.

Wyn had put a comforting arm over the shoulder of the boatman's daughter. "We'll just forget it, my dear," she said, gently.

But it was not so easy to forget—not so easy for Polly, at least, although the other girls treated her as nicely as they could. Her face remained sad, and she could not respond to their quips and sallies as the fleet of four canoes and Polly's skiff got under weigh.

Polly pulled strongly along the shore in her light craft; but of course the canoes could have left her far behind had the girls so wished. Their guide warned them finally against loud talking and splashing, and soon they came to a quiet cove where the trees stood thickly along the lake shore, and the water was not much ruffled by the morning breeze.

Polly had brought the right kind of bait for perch, and most of the girls of the Go-Ahead Club had no difficulty in arranging their rods and lines and casting for the hungry fish. Perch, "shiners," roaches, and an occasional "bullhead" began to

come into the canoes. These latter scared some of the girls; but they were better eating than any of the other fish and both Wyn and Frank, as well as Polly, knew how to take them off the hook without getting "horned."

Polly did not remain with them more than an hour. She was sure the girls would get all the fish they would want right at this spot, and so, excusing herself, she rowed back to the landing.

"It's a shame!" exclaimed Frank, the minute she was out of hearing. "I don't see what possesses Bess to be so mean."

"I am sorry," rejoined Wyn. "Polly will not come to the camp again—I can see that."

"A shame!" cried Percy. "And she seems such a nice girl."

"Bessie ought to be strapped!" declared Frank.

"I am sure Polly seems just as good as we are," Grace remarked. "I don't see why Bess has to make herself so objectionable."

"She should be punished for it," declared Percy.

"Turn the tables on her," suggested Frank. "If she will not have anything to do with Polly, let's give *her* the cold shoulder."

"No," said Wyn, firmly. "That would be

adding fuel to the flames—and would be unfair to Bess."

"Well, Bess is unfair to your Polly Jolly," said Frankie.

"Two wrongs never yet made a right," said the captain of the Go-Ahead Club.

"Well!"

"Bessie is a member of our club. She has greater rights at Green Knoll Camp than Polly. It is true Polly will not come again, unless Bessie is more friendly. The thing, then is to convince Bess that she is wrong."

"Well!" exclaimed Frank again. "I'd like to see you do it."

"I hope you will see me," returned Wyn, placidly. "Or, at least, I hope you will see Bessie's mind changed, whether by my efforts, or not. Oh, dear! it's so much easier to get along pleasantly in this world if folks only thought so. Query: Why is a grouch?"

Percy suddenly uttered a yell and almost plunged out of her canoe. She had whipped in her line and there was a small eel on the hook.

It is really wonderful what an excited eel can do in a canoe with a girl as his partner in crime! Mr. Eel tangled up Percy's line in the first place until it seemed as though somebody must have been playing cat's cradle with it.

Percy shrieked and finally bethought her to throw the whole thing overboard—tangled line, rod, and Mr. Eel. In his native element, the slippery chap in some mysterious way got off the hook; but the linen line was a mess, and that stopped the fishing for that morning.

They had a nice string, however, and when the odor of the frying fish on the outdoor fire began to spread about Green Knoll Camp, Frank declared:

"The angels flying overhead must stop to sniff—that smell is so heavenly!"

"Nonsense, child!" returned Grace. "That thing you see 'way up there isn't an angel. It's a fish-hawk."

There were letters to take to the Forge that afternoon, and the girls all expected mail, too. But after the fishing bout, and the heavy dinner they ate, not many of the Go-Aheads cared to paddle to town.

"The duty devolves on your captain," announced Wyn, good-naturedly. "Of course, if anybody else wants to go along——"

"Don't all speak at once," yawned Frank, and rolled over in the shade of the beech.

"It's a shame! I'll go with you," said Bessie Lavine, getting up with alacrity.

"All right, Bess," said Wyn, cheerfully. "I am glad to have you go."

The other girls had been a little distant to Bess since their return from the fishing trip; but not Wyn. She had given no sign that she was annoyed by Bessie's demeanor towards Polly Jarley.

Nor did she "preach" while she and Bess paddled to the Forge. That was not Wynifred Mallory's way. She knew that, in this case, taking Bess to task for her treatment of Polly would do only harm.

Bess had probably offered to come with Wyn for the special purpose of finding opportunity to argue the case with the captain of the club. But Wyn gave her no opening.

The girls got to the Forge, did their errands, and started back in the canoes. Not until they got well out into the lake did they notice that there were angry clouds in the northwest. And very soon the sun became overcast, while the wind whipped down upon them sharply.

"Oh, dear, me!" cried Bess. "Had we better turn back, Wyn?"

"We're about as far from the Forge as we are from Green Knoll Camp," declared the other girl.

"Then let's run ashore——"

But they had struck right out into the lake from the landing, and it was a long way to land—even

to the nearest point. While they were discussing the advisability of changing their course, there came a lull in the wind.

"Maybe we'll get home all right!" cried Bess, and the two bent to their paddles again, driving the canoes toward distant Green Knoll.

And almost at once—her words had scarcely passed—the wind whipped down upon them from a different direction. The surface of the lake was agitated angrily, and in a minute the two girls were in the midst of a whirlpool of jumping waves.

In ordinary water the canoes were safe enough. But when Bess tried to paddle, a wave caught the blade and whirled the canoe around. She was upset before she could scream.

And in striving to drive her own craft to her friend's assistance, Wyn Mallory was caught likewise in a flaw, and she, too, plunged into the lake, while both canoes floated bottom upward.

CHAPTER XIII

A SERIOUS ADVENTURE

WYN MALLORY was a pretty cool-headed girl; nor was this the first time she had been in an accident of this nature.

Naturally, in learning to handle the light cedar craft as expertly as they did, the members of the Go-Ahead Club had much experience. While the weather was good the girls plied their paddles up and down the Wintinooski, but seldom was the river as rough as this open lake in which Wyn and Bessie Lavine had been so unexpectedly overturned.

"Oh! am I not the unluckiest girl that—that ever happened?" wailed Bess, when she came up puffing.

"N-o-no more than *I*, Bess," stammered Wyn.

"Get your canoe, Wyn!" cried Bess.

"Oh, yes; but we can't turn them over in this sea. Oh! isn't that horrid!" as another miniature wave slapped the captain of the club in the face and rolled her companion completely over.

Bess lost her grip on her canoe. The latter floated beyond her reach while Wyn was striving to get her friend to the surface again.

"Why! we're going to be drowned!" shrieked Bess, suddenly horror-stricken.

"Don't you *dare* lose your nerve," commanded Wynifred. "If we lose courage we certainly will be lost."

"Oh, but, Wyn——"

"Oh, but, Bess! Don't you dare. Here! get hold of the keel of my canoe."

"But it won't bear us both up," groaned Bessie Lavine.

"It's got to," declared Wyn. "Have courage; don't be afraid."

"You needn't try to tell me you're not afraid yourself, Wyn Mallory!" chattered her friend.

"Of course I am, dear; but I mean, don't lose your head because you *are* afraid," said Wyn. "Come, now! Paddle with one hand and cling to the keel with the other. I'll do the same."

"Oh, dear, me! if we were only not so far from the shore," groaned Bess.

"Somebody may see us and come to our help," said Wyn, with more confidence in her tone than she really felt.

"The canoes couldn't live in this gale."

"It's only a squall."

"That's all very well; but they wouldn't dare to start out for us from Green Knoll."

"But the boys——"

"Their camp isn't in sight of this place, Wyn," moaned Bess. "Oh! we *will* be drowned."

But Wyn had another hope. She remembered, just before the overturn, that she had caught a glimpse of the red and yellow cottage behind Jarley's Landing.

"Oh, Bess!" she gasped. "Perhaps Mr. Jarley will see us. Perhaps Polly——"

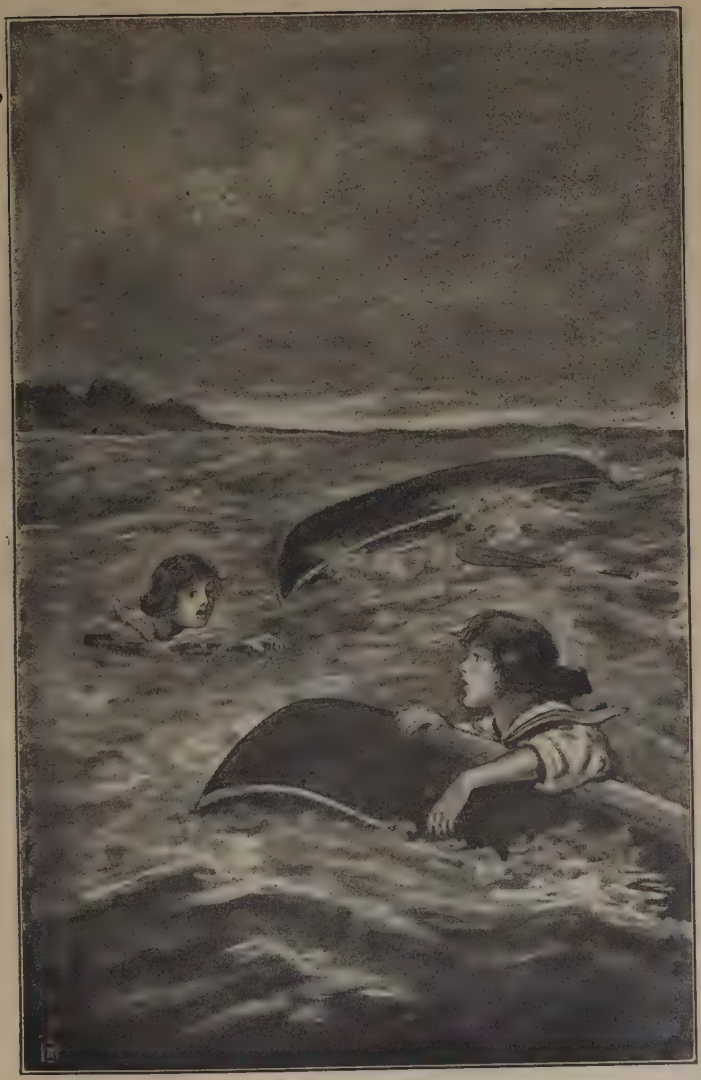
Another slapping wave came and rolled them and the canoe over. The frail craft came keel up, level full of water. The least weight upon it now would send it to the bottom of the lake.

"Oh, oh!" shrieked Bess, when she found her voice. "What shall we do now?"

They could both swim; but the lake was rough. The sudden and spiteful squall had torn up the surface for many yards around. Yet, as they rose upon one of the waves, they saw the sun shining boldly in the westward. The squall was scurrying away.

"Come on! we've got to swim," urged Wyn.

"That's so hard," wailed Bess, but striking out, nevertheless, in the way she had been so well taught by the instructor in Denton. All these



THEY COULD BOTH SWIM, BUT THE LAKE WAS ROUGH.

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girls had been trained in the public school baths.

"There's the other canoe," said Wyn, hopefully.

"But we—we don't want to go that way," gasped Bess. "It's away from land."

Now Wyn knew very well that they had scarcely a chance of swimming to the distant shore. In ordinarily calm weather—yes; but in this rough sea, and hampered as they were by their bloomers and other clothing—no.

The two girls swam close together, but Wyn dared not offer her comrade help. She wanted to, but she feared that if she did so Bess would break down and become helpless entirely; and Wyn hoped they would get much farther inshore before that happened.

The squall had quite gone over and the sun began to shine. It seemed a cruel thing—to drown out there in the sunlight. And yet the buffeting little waves, kicked up by the wind-flaw, were so hard to swim through.

Had the waves been of a really serious size the struggle would have been less difficult for the two girls. They could have ridden over the big waves and managed to keep their heads above water; but every once in a while a cross wavelet would slap their faces, and every time one did so Bess managed to get a mouthful of water.

"Oh! what will papa do?" moaned Bess.

And Wyn knew what the poor girl meant. She was her father's close companion and chum. The other girls in the Lavine family were smaller and their mother was devoted to them; but Bess and Mr. Lavine were pals all the time.

Bess repeated this exclamation over and over again, until Wyn thought she should shriek in nervous despair. She realized quite fully that their chance for life was very slim indeed; but moaning and groaning about it would not benefit them or change the situation in the slightest degree.

Wyn kept her head and saved her breath for work. She raised up now and then, breast high in the water, and tried to scan the shore.

Suddenly the sun revealed Green Knoll Camp to her—bathing the little hillock, with the tents upon it, in the full strength of his rays. But it was quite two miles away.

Wyn could see no moving figures upon the knoll. Nor could her friends see her and Bess struggling in the water at that distance. If their overset had not been sighted, Mrs. Havel and the four other members of the Go-Ahead Club would not be aware of their peril.

And, Wyn believed, the swamping of the canoes could only have been observed through a glass.

Had anybody along shore been watching the two canoes as the squall struck the craft and overset them?

In that possibility, she thought, lay their only hope of rescue.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REPULSE

As the squall threatened in the northwest, it had been observed by many on the shores of Lake Honotonka—and many on the lake itself, as well. Sailing craft had run for havens. The lake could be nasty at times and there might be more than a capful of wind in the black cloud that spread so quickly over a sky that had—an hour before—been of azure.

Had the two girls from Green Knoll Camp been observed by the watermen as they embarked in their canoes at Meade's Forge, they might have been warned against venturing far from the shore in those cockleshells. But Wynifred and Bessie had not been observed, so were not warned.

The squall had come down so quickly that they were not much to be blamed. It had startled other people on the lake—and those much more used to its vagaries.

In a cove on the north shore a small cat-rigged boat had been drifting since noon-time, its single occupant having found the fishing very good. This

fisher was the boatman's daughter, Polly Jarley.

She had now a splendid catch and she knew that, if the wind held true, a sharp run to the westward would bring her to Braisely Park. At some one of the private landings there her fish would be welcomed—she could get more for them than she could at the Forge, which was nearer.

But the squall gathered so fast that she had to put aside the thought of the run down the lake. The wind would switch about, too, after the squall. That was a foregone conclusion.

She waited until the blow was past and then saw that it would be quite impossible to make the park that afternoon and return to the landing in time for tea. And if she was later her father would be worried.

Mr. Jarley did not like to have his girl go out this way and work all day; but there seemed nothing else to be done this summer. They owed so much at the stores at the Forge; and the principal and interest on the chattel mortgage must be found before New Year or they would lose their fleet of boats. And as yet few campers had come to the lake who wished to hire Mr. Jarley's boats.

So by fishing (and none of the old fellows who had fished Honotonka for years was wiser about the good fishing places than Polly) the girl added from one to two dollars every favorable

day to the family income. Sometimes she was off by light in one boat or another; but she did not often come to this northern side of the lake. This cove was at least ten miles from home.

As the last breath of the squall passed, the wind veered as she had expected, and Polly, having reeled in her two lines and unjointed the bamboo poles, stowed everything neatly, raised the anchor, or kedge, and set a hand's breadth of the big sail.

The canvas filled, and with the sheet in one hand and the other on the arm of the tiller, the girl steered the catboat out of the cove and into the rumpus kicked up by the passing squall.

The girls of the Go-Ahead Club would surely have been frightened had they been aboard the little *Coquette,* as the catboat was named. She rocked and jumped, and the spume flew over her gunwale in an intermittent shower. But in this sea, which so easily swamped the canoes, the catboat was as safe as a house.

Polly was used to much rougher weather than this. In the summer Lake Honotonka was on its best behavior. At other seasons the tempests tore down from the north and west and sometimes made the lake so terrible in appearance that even the hardiest bateau man in those parts would not risk himself in a boat.

Polly knew, however, that the worst of the

squall was over. The lake would gradually subside to its former calm. And the change in the wind was favorable now to a quick passage either to the Forge or to her father's tiny landing.

"Can't get any fancy price for the fish at Meade's," thought Polly. "I have a good mind to put them in our trap and try again for Braisely Park to-morrow morning."

As she spoke she was running outside the horns of the cove. She could get a clear sweep now of the lake—as far as it could be viewed from the low eminence of the boat—and she rose up to see it.

"Nobody out but I," she thought. "Ah! all those folk at the end of the lake ran in when the squall appeared. And the girls and boys over yonder——"

She was peering now across the lake ahead of the *Coquette's* nose, toward the little island where was Cave-in-the-Wood Camp, and at Green Knoll Camp, where the girls from Denton were staying.

Her face fell as she focused her gaze upon the bit of high, green bank on which the sun was now shining again so brilliantly. She remembered how badly she had been treated by Bess Lavine only that morning.

"I can't go over there any more," she muttered. "That girl will never forget—or let the others

forget—that father has been accused of being a thief. It's a shame! A hateful shame! And we're every bit as good as she is——"

Her gaze dropped to the tumbling wavelets between her and the distant green hillock. She was about to resume her seat and catch the tiller, which she had held steady with her knee.

But now her breath left her and for a moment she stood motionless—only giving to the plunge and jump of the *Coquette* through the choppy waves.

"Ah!" she exclaimed again, after a little intake of breath.

There were two round objects rising and falling in the rough water—and far ahead. They looked like cocoanuts.

But a little to one side was a long, black something—a stick of timber drifting on the current? No! *An overturned boat.*

There was no mistaking the cocoanut-like objects. They were human heads. Two capsized people were struggling in the lake.

Polly, in thirty seconds, was keenly alive to what she must do. There was no time lost in bewailing the catastrophe, or wondering about the identity of the castaways.

Who or whatever they were they must be saved. There was not another boat on the lake. And the

swimmers were too far from land to be observed under any conditions.

The wind was strong and steady. The wavelets were still choppy, but Polly Jarley never thought of a wetting.

Up went the sail—up, up, up until the unhelmed catboat lay over almost on beam ends. The girl took a sailor's turn of the sheet around the cleat and then swung all her weight against the tiller, to bring the boat's head up. She held the sheet ready to let go if a warning creak from the mast should sound, or the boat refuse to respond.

But in half a minute the *Coquette* righted. It had been a perilous chance—she might have torn the stick out. The immediate peril was past, however. The great canvas filled. Away shot the sprightly *Coquette* with the wind—a bone in her teeth.

Now and then she dipped and the spume flew high, drenching Polly. The boatman's daughter was not dressed for this rough work, for she was hatless and wore merely a blouse and old skirt for outside garments. She had pulled off her shoes and stockings while she fished and had not had time to put them on again.

So the flying spray wet her through. She dodged occasionally to protect her eyes from the spoondrift which slatted so sharply across the deck and

into the cockpit. The water gathered in the bottom of the old boat and was soon ankle-deep.

But Polly knew the craft was tight and that this water could be bailed out again when she had time. Just now her mind and gaze were fixed mainly upon the round, bobbing objects ahead.

For some minutes, although the catboat was traveling about as fast as Polly had ever sailed, save in a power boat, the girl could not be sure whether the swamped voyagers were girls or boys. It might be two of the Busters, from Gannet Island, for all she knew. She had made up her mind that the victims of the accident were from one camp or the other. There were no other campers as yet on the shore at this end of the lake.

Then Polly realized that the heads belonged to girls. She could see the braids floating out behind. And she knew that they were fighting for their lives.

They swam near together; once one of them raised up breast high in the water, as though looking shoreward. But neither turned back to see if help was coming from behind.

With both hands engaged with sheet and tiller Polly could not make a megaphone to carry her voice; but several times she shouted as loud as she could:

"Ahoy! Hold on! I'm coming!"

Her voice seemed flung right back into her face —drowned by the slatting spray. How viciously that water stung!

The *Coquette* was traveling at racing speed; but would she be in time?

How long could those two girls bear up in the choppy sea?

One of the heads suddenly disappeared. Polly shrieked; but she could do nothing to aid.

The spray filled her eyes again and, when she had shaken them free, Polly saw that the other swimmer—the stronger one—had gotten her comrade above the surface once more.

Indeed, this one was swimming on her back and holding up the girl who had gone under. How brave she was!

The sun shone clear upon the two in the water and Polly recognized Wynifred Mallory.

"Wyn! Wynnie! Hold to her! Hold up!" cried the boatman's daughter. "I'll help you!"

But she was still so far away—it seemed as though the catboat never *would* come within hailing distance. But before she turned over in the water to swim with Bessie's hand upon her shoulder, the captain of the Go-Ahead Club beheld the catboat rushing down upon them.

She could only wave a beckoning hand. She could not cry out. Wyn was well-nigh breathless,

and Bessie's only hope was in her. The captain of the canoe club had to save her strength.

Down swooped the catboat. Polly was shouting madly; but not for an instant did she lose control of the boat or ignore the work she had in hand. She wanted to encourage Wyn and the other; but she was taking no chances.

Suddenly she let the sheet run and loosed the halliards. The canvas fluttered down on the deck with a rustle and crash. The catboat sprang to even keel, but shot on under the momentum it had gained in swooping down upon the swamped girls.

"Wyn! hold hard! *I've got you!*"

But it was the other girl Polly grasped. Wyn had turned, thrust the half-drowned Bessie before her, and Polly, leaning over the gunwale of the tossing boat, seized her by the shoulders.

In a moment she heaved up, struggled, dragged the other girl forward, and together rescuer and rescued tumbled flat into the cockpit of the *Coquette*.

Polly shouted again:

"Wyn! Wyn! I'll come back for you——"

"Give me a hand!" cried Wyn, hanging to the rudder. "Polly! you old darling! If you hadn't got here when you did——"

Polly left Bess to her own resources and rushed to the stern. She helped Wyn clamber into the

boat. Then she hoisted the sail again, and got way upon the boat. She raised the canvas only a little, for she had risked all the weight she dared upon the mast before.

"Are you all right, Bess?" cried Wyn.

"I—I'm alive. But, oh! I'm so—so sick," gasped Miss Lavine.

"Brace up, Bess! We're all right now. Polly has saved us."

"Polly?" cried Bess, sitting up, the better to see the boatman's daughter as the latter sat again at the helm. "Oh, Polly!"

"You'd better both lie down till we get to the camp. I'll take you right there," said the other girl, briefly.

"We'd have been—been drowned, Wyn!" gasped Bess.

"I guess we would. We are still a long way from shore."

"And Polly saved us? All alone? How wonderful!"

But Polly's face was stern. She scarcely spoke to the two Denton girls as the *Coquette* swept across the lake. Wyn told her just how it all happened and the condition of the two canoes when they lost sight of them.

"I saw one; maybe the other can be found," Polly said. "I'll speak to father and, if the moon

comes up clear bye and bye, we'll run out and see if we can recover them."

But for Bess she had no word, or look, and when the other put out her hand timidly and tried to thank her, as they neared the shore, Polly only said:

"That's all right. We're used to helping people who get overturned. It really is nothing."

She would not see Bessie's hand. The latter felt the repulse and Wyn, who watched them both anxiously, dared not say a word.

CHAPTER XV

TROUBLE "BRUIN"

THE other girls and Mrs. Havel were all down on the beach to meet the catboat and her passengers. To see Wyn and Bessie returning across the lake in the sailboat, instead of the canoes, forewarned the Go-Aheads that an accident had happened.

But although the girls were wet and bedraggled, the captain of the club made light of the affair.

"Where are your canoes?"

"What's happened?"

"Who is it with you?"

"What under the sun did you do—go overboard?"

Wyn answered all questions in a single sentence:

"We were capsized and lost the letters and things; but Polly picked us up and brought us home."

Then, amid the excited cries and congratulations, her voice rose again:

"Isn't she brave? What do you think of my Polly Jolly *now?* Can you blame me for being proud of her?"

"I tell you wh—what she is!" gasped Bessie. "She's the bravest and smartest girl I ever heard of."

"Good for you, Bess!" shouted Frank Cameron, helping the castaways ashore. "You're coming to your senses."

"And—and I'm sorry," blurted out Bess, "that I ever treated her so——"

Polly shoved off the catboat and proceeded to get under way again.

"Oh, *do* come ashore, Polly!" begged Grace.

"I want to hug you, Miss Jarley!" cried Percy.

"What? All wet as I am now?" returned the boatman's daughter, laughing—although the laugh was not a pleasant one. "You make too much of this matter. We're used to oversets on the lake. It is nothing."

"You do not call saving two girls' lives *nothing,* my dear—surely?" proposed Mrs. Havel.

"If I saved them, I am very, very glad of it," returned Polly, gravely. "Anybody would be glad of *that,* of course. But you are making too much of it——"

"My father will not think so!" exclaimed the

almost hysterical Bess. "When he learns of this he will not be able to do enough for you——"

"Your father can do nothing for me, Bessie Lavine!" cried the boatman's daughter, with sharpness.

"Oh, Polly!" said Wyn, holding out her arms to her.

"He'll—he'll *want* to," pursued Bess, eagerly. "Oh! he will! He'd do anything for you now——"

"There's only one thing Henry Lavine can do for me," cried Polly, turning an angry face now toward the shore. "He can stop telling stories about my father. He can be kind to him—be decent to him. I don't want anything else—and I don't want that as pay for fishing you out of the lake!"

She had got the sail up again and now the breeze filled it. The *Coquette* laid over and slipped away from the shore. Her last words had silenced all the girls—even Mrs. Havel herself.

Bess burst into tears. She was quite broken down, and Wyn went off with her to the tent, her arm over her shoulder, and whispering to her comfortingly.

"I don't care. Polly's served her right," declared Frank Cameron.

"I do not know that Polly can be blamed," Mrs. Havel observed. "But—but I wish she was more forgiving. It is not for herself that she speaks, however. It is for her father."

"And I'll wager he's just as nice a man as ever was," declared Frank. "I'm going to ask *my* father if he will not do something for Mr. Jarley."

"Do so, Frances," advised the chaperon. "I think you will do well."

The accident cast a cloud over Green Knoll Camp for the evening. The girls who had been swamped went to bed and were dosed with hot drinks brewed over the campfire by Mrs. Havel. And when the boys came over in their fleet for an evening sing and frolic, they were sent back again to the island almost at once.

The boys did not take altogether kindly to this rebuff, and Tubby was heard to say:

"Isn't that just like girls? Because they got a little wet they must go to bed and take catnip tea, or something, and be quiet. Their nerves are all unstrung! Gee! wouldn't that make your ears buzz?"

"Aw, you're a doubting Thomas and always will be, Tub," said Ferd Roberts. "You never believe what you're told. You're as suspicious as the farmer who went to town and bought

a pair of shoes, and when he'd paid for 'em the clerk says:

"'Now, sir, can't I sell you a pair of shoe trees?'

"'Don't you get fresh with me, sonny,' says the farmer, his whiskers bristling. 'I don't believe shoes kin be raised on trees any more 'n I believe rubbers grow on rubber trees, or oysters on oyster plants, b'gosh!'"

"Well," snarled the fat youth, as the other Busters laughed, "the girls are always making excuses. You can never tell what a girl means, anyway—not by what she *says*."

"You know speech was given us to hide our thoughts," laughed Dave.

"Say! I'll get square just the same—paddlin' clear over here for nothing. Humph! I know that Hedges girl is afraid there's bears in the woods? Say, fellers! I've *got* it! Yes, I've got it!"

When Tubby spoke in this way, and his eyes snapped and he began to look eager, his mates knew that the fat youth's gigantic mind was working overtime, and they immediately gathered around and stopped paddling.

As Dave said, chuckling, a little later, "trouble was bruin!"

In the morning the girls found the two lost

canoes on the shore below the camp. Polly and her father had evidently gone out in the evening, after the moon rose, and recovered them. Neither, of course, was damaged.

"And we must do something nice to pay them for it!" cried Grace.

Bessie was still deeply concerned over Polly's attitude.

"I am going to write father at once, and tell him all about it," she said. "And I *am* sorry for the way I treated Polly at first. Do you suppose she will ever forgive me, Wyn?"

Just as Wyn had once said in discussing Bessie's character: when the latter realized that she was in the wrong, or had been unfair to anyone, she was never afraid to admit her fault and try to "make it up." But this seemed to be a case where it was very difficult for Bessie to "square herself."

The boatman's daughter had shown herself unwilling to be friendly with Bess. Nor was Polly, perhaps, to be blamed.

However, on this particular morning the girls of Green Knoll Camp had something besides Bessie's disturbance of mind and Polly Jarley's attitude to think about.

And this "something" came upon them with a suddenness that set the entire camp in an up-

roar. Grace, the dilatory, was picking berries before breakfast along the edge of the clearing, and popping them into her mouth as fast as she could find ripe ones.

"Come here and help, Grace!" called Percy from the tent where she was shaking out the heavy blankets. "I'm not going to do all my work and yours, too."

"You come and help *me*. It's more fun," returned Grace, laughing at her.

Then the lazy girl turned and reached for a particularly juicy blackberry, in the clump ahead of her. Percy saw her struck motionless for a second, or two; then the big girl fairly fell backward, rolled over, picked herself up, and raced back to the tents, her mouth wide open and her hair streaming in the wind.

"What *is* the matter?" gasped Percy.

"Oh, Grace! you look dreadful! Tell us, what has happened!" begged Bessie, as the big girl sank down by the entrance to the tent, her limbs too weak to bear her farther.

"What has scared you so, Grace?" demanded Wyn, running up.

Grace's eyes rolled, she shut and opened her mouth again several times. Then she was only able to gasp out the one word:

"Bear!"

The other girls came crowding around. "What do you mean, Grace?" "Stop trying to scare us, Grace!" "She's fooling," were some of the cries they uttered.

But Wyn saw that her friend was really frightened; she was not "putting it on."

"You don't mean that it was a *real* bear?" cried Frank Cameron.

"A bear, I tell you!" moaned Grace, rocking herself to and fro. "I told you they were here in the woods."

"Oh, dear me!" screamed Mina. "What shall we do?"

"You didn't *see* it, Grace?" demanded Wyn, sternly. "You only heard it."

"I saw it, I tell you!"

"Not really?"

"Do—do you think I don't know a bear when I see one?" demanded Grace. "He—he'll be right after us——"

"No. If it was a real, wild bear he would be just as scared at seeing you as you would be at seeing him," remarked the decidedly sensible captain.

"He—he *couldn't* be as scared as I am," moaned Grace, with considerable emphasis.

"I don't believe there's a bear within miles and miles of here!" declared Frank.

"Well! I declare I hope there isn't," cried Bess.

"I'll look," offered Wyn. "Grace just thought she saw something."

"A great, black and brown hairy beast!" moaned Grace. "He stood right up on his hind legs and stretched out his arms to me——"

"Enamored of all your young charms," giggled Frank.

"It's no joke!" gasped the frightened one.

"It *might* be a bear, you know," quavered Mina.

The breakfast was being neglected. Mrs. Havel was down at the edge of the lake washing out some bits of lace. She had not heard the rumpus.

"I'm going to see," announced Frank, and ran back over the course Grace had come.

She reached the berry bushes. She parted them and peered through. She began to enter the jungle, indeed, in search of bruin.

And then the girls all heard a sort of snuffling growl—just the sort of a noise they *thought* a bear must make. Frank jumped out of those bushes as though they had become suddenly afire!

"Wha—what did I tell you?" screamed Grace.

"He's there!" groaned Mina.

Then suddenly a dark object appeared among the saplings and underbrush.

"Look out, Frank! Run!" cried the other girls, in chorus; but Miss Cameron needed no urging; she ran with all her might!

CHAPTER XVI

TIT FOR TAT

BUT instead of returning toward the tents she ran straight across the clearing. Possibly she did not stop to think where she was going, for she came against the underbrush again and that terrific growl was once more repeated.

Frankie stopped as though she had been shot. Right in front of her loomed a second black, hairy figure.

She glared around wildly. At the back of the clearing was the opening into the wood path leading from Windmill Farm down to the boat-landing at John Jarley's place. And in that opening, and for an instant, appeared likewise a threatening form!

"Come here! Come here, Frank!" shrieked Bess. "There's another of them—we're surrounded."

The Cameron girl started again, and let out the last link of speed that there was in her. She ran straight down to the shore where Mrs. Havel

just aroused by the shrieks, was starting to return to camp.

The other girls piled after her. But Wyn brought up the rear. She looked around now and then. Three bears! In a place where no bears had been seen for years and years! Wyn was puzzled.

"There are bears in the woods, Mrs. Havel!" gasped Grace.

"Nonsense, child!"

"I saw 'em. One almost grabbed me," declared the big girl.

"And *I* saw them, Auntie," urged Percy Havel.

"This way! this way!" cried Frank, running along the shore under the high knoll on which the camp was pitched. "They can't see us down here."

Mrs. Havel was urged along by her niece and Grace. Wyn brought up the rear. Oddly enough, none of the bears came out of the bushes—that she could see.

The girls plunged along the sand, and through the shallow water for several yards. Here the bushes grew right down to the edge of the lake. Suddenly Wyn caught sight of something ahead, and uttered a sharp command:

"Stop! every one of you! Do you hear me, Frank? Stop!"

"Oh, dear! they can eat us here just as well as anywhere," groaned Grace.

"Now be quiet!" said Wynifred, in some heat. "We've all been foolish enough. *Those were not bears.*"

"Cows, maybe, Wynnie?" asked Mrs. Havel. "But I am quite as afraid of cows——"

"Nor cows, either. I guess you wouldn't have been fooled for a minute if you had seen them," said Wyn.

"What do you mean, Wyn?" cried Frank. "I tell you I saw them with my own eyes——"

"Of course you did. So did I," admitted Wyn. "But we did not see them right. They are not bears, walking on their hind legs; they are just boys walking on the only legs they've got!"

"The Busters!" ejaculated Frank.

"Oh, Wyn! do you think so?" asked Mina, hopefully.

"Look ahead," commanded Wyn. "There are the boys' canoes. They paddled over here this morning and dressed up in those old moth-eaten buffalo robes they had over there, on the island, and managed to frighten us nicely."

"That's it! They played a joke on us," began Frank, laughing.

But Mrs. Havel was angry. "They should be

sent home for playing such a trick," she said, "and I shall speak to Professor Skillings about it."

"Pooh!" said Wyn. "They're only boys. And of course they'll be up to such tricks. The thing to do is to go them one better."

"How, Wyn, how?" cried her mates.

"I do not know that I can allow this, Wynifred," began Mrs. Havel, doubtfully.

"You wish to punish them; don't you, Mrs. Havel?"

"They should be punished—yes."

"Then we have the chance," cried Wyn, gleefully. "You go back to the camp, Mrs. Havel, and we girls will take their canoes—every one of them. We'll call them the trophies of war, and we'll make the Busters pay—and pay well for them—before they get their canoes back. What do you say, girls?"

"Splendid!" cried Frank. "And they frightened me so!"

"Look out for the biscuits, Mrs. Havel, please," begged Bess. "I am afraid they will be burned."

The lady returned hurriedly to the camp on the top of the hillock. When she mounted the rise from the shore, there was a circle of giggling youths about the open fireplace and a pile of moth-eaten buffalo hides near by. Dave was messing

with the Dutch oven in which Bess had just before put the pan of biscuit for breakfast.

"Ho, ho!" cried Tubby. "Where are the girls?"

"Bear hunting, I bet!" cried Ferd Roberts.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Havel," said Dave, smiling rather sheepishly. "I hope we didn't scare *you.*"

"You rather startled me—coming unannounced," admitted Mrs. Havel, but smiling quietly. "You surely have not breakfasted so early?"

"No. That's part of the game," declared another youth. "We claim forfeit—and in this case take payment in eats."

"I am afraid you are more slangy than understandable," returned Mrs. Havel. "Did you come for something particular?"

"Goodness! didn't you see those girls running?" cried Ferd.

"Running? Where to?" queried the chaperone.

Dave began to look more serious.

"Perhaps they are running yet!" squealed Tubby, only seeing the fun of it.

"Bet they've gone for help to hunt the bears," laughed another of the reckless youngsters.

"They'll get out the whole countryside to find

'em," choked Ferdinand Roberts. "That's *too* rich."

"Are you sure the girls didn't come your way, Mrs. Havel?" asked Dave, with anxiety.

"Oh, the girls will be back presently. I came up to see to the biscuit, Mr. Shepard. About inviting you to breakfast—You know, I am only a guest of Green Knoll Camp myself. I couldn't invite you," said Mrs. Havel, demurely.

The boys looked at each other in some surprise and Tubby's face fell woefully.

"Ca—can't we do something to help you get breakfast, Mrs. Havel?"

Mrs. Havel had to hide a smile at that, but she remained obdurate. "I have really nothing to do with it, Sir Tubby. You must wait for the girls to come," she said.

The boys began whispering together; but they did not move. They had scuttled over from their own camp early with the express intention of "getting one" on the girls, and making a breakfast out of it. But now the accomplishment of their purpose seemed doubtful, and there was a hollow look about them all that should have made Mrs. Havel pity them.

That lady, however, remembered vividly how she had run along the shore in fear of a flock

of bears; this was a part of the boys' punishment for that ill-begotten joke.

The biscuit were beginning to brown, the coffee sent off a delicious odor, and here were eggs ready to drop into the kettle of boiling water for their four-minute submersion. Besides, there was mush and milk. Every minute the boys became hungrier.

"Aren't the girls ever coming?" sighed Tubby. "They *couldn't* be so heartless."

"They haven't gone far; have they?" queried Dave Shepard. "We saw their canoes on the beach."

Just then the laughter of the girls in the distance broke upon the ears of those on the hillock. They were approaching along the shore—apparently from the direction of Jarley's landing.

"They don't seem to have been much scared, after all," grumbled Tubby to Ferd.

"It was a silly thing to do, anyway," returned young Roberts. "Suppose we don't get any breakfast?"

At this horrid thought the fat youth almost fainted. The girls came in sight, and at once hailed the boys gaily:

"Oh! see who's here!" cried Frank. "What a lovely surprise!"

"Isn't it?" said Bess, but with rather a vicious

snap. "We couldn't get along, of course, without having a parcel of boys around. 'Morning, Mr. Shepard."

Bess made a difference between Dave and the rest of the Busters, for Dave had helped her in a serious difficulty.

"Where's the professor?" demanded Grace. "Isn't he here, too?"

"He's having breakfast all by his lonesome over on the island," said Ferd, and Tubby groaned at the word "breakfast," while Dave added:

"We—we got a dreadfully early start this morning."

"Quite a start—I should say," returned Wyn, smiling broadly. "And now you're hungry, I suppose?"

"Oh, aren't we, just?" cried one of the crowd, hollowly.

"How about it, Bess? Is there enough for so many more?"

Bess was already sifting flour for more biscuit. She said: "I'll have another panful in a jiffy. Put in the eggs, Mina. We can make a beginning."

"There's plenty of mush," said Mina. "That's one sure thing."

"But we can't all sit down," cried Grace. You know, there are but six of these folding

seats, and Wyn's been sitting on a cracker box ever since we set up the tents."

"Feed 'em where they're sitting," said Wyn, quickly. "Beggars mustn't be choosers."

"Jinks! we didn't treat you like this when you came over to our camp," cried Ferd.

"And we didn't come over almost before you were up in the morning," responded Frank, quickly. "How did you know we had made our 'twilights' at such an unconscionable hour?"

The girls were all laughing a good deal. Nobody said a word about the "bear" fright, and the boys felt a little diffidence about broaching the subject. Evidently their joke had fallen flat.

But the girls really had no intention of being mean to the six Busters. The first pan of biscuit came out of the oven a golden brown. Grace and Percy set them and the bowls of mush on the table, and handed around other bowls and a pitcher of milk to the circle of boys, sitting cross-legged on the ground like so many tailors.

There was honey for the biscuits, too, as well as golden butter—both from Windmill Farm. The eggs were cooked just right, and there were plenty of them. Crisp radishes and sliced cucumbers and tomatoes added to the fare.

"Gee!" sighed Tubby, "doesn't it take girls

to live *right* in camp? And look at those doughnuts."

"I fried them," cried Mina, proudly. "Mrs. Havel showed me how, though."

"Mrs. Havel, come over to Gannet Island and teach us how to cook," cried Dave. "We don't have anything like this."

"Not a sweetie except what we buy at the Forge—and that's baker's stuff," complained Tubby.

"Don't you think you boys had better be pretty good to us—if you want to come to tea—or breakfast—once in a while?" asked Wyn, pointedly.

"Right!" declared Dave.

"Got us there," admitted Ferdinand.

"*I'll* see that they behave themselves, Wyn," cried Tubby, with great enthusiasm. "These fellows are too fresh, anyway——"

But at this the other boys rose up in their might and pitched upon Master Blaisdell, rolling him over and over on the grass and making him lose half of his last doughnut.

"Now, now, now!" cried Mrs. Havel. "This is no bear-garden. Try to behave."

The boys began to laugh uproariously at this. "What do *you* know about a bear-garden, Grace?" Ferd demanded.

"And wasn't that growling of Dave's awe-inspiring?" cried another.

"And weren't *you* scared, Frank Cameron?" suggested Tubby, grinning hugely when his mates had let him up. "I never did know you could run so fast."

"Why, pshaw!" responded Frank. "Did you boys really think you had scared us with those moth-eaten old robes?"

"How ridiculous!" chimed in Bess. "A boy is usually a good deal of a bear, I know; but he doesn't *look* like one."

"And—and there haven't been any bears in this country for—for years," said Grace, though rather quaveringly.

"Say! what do you know about all this?" demanded Dave, of his mates.

"Do you girls mean to say that you weren't scared pretty near into fits?" cried one lad.

"Did we act scared?" laughed Wyn. "I guess we fooled you a little, eh?"

"You're just as much mistaken," said Frank, "as the red-headed man was who went to see the doctor because he had indigestion. When the doctor told him to diet, it wasn't his hair he meant; but the red-headed man got mad just the same. Now, you boys——"

"Aw, come! come!" cried Dave. "You can't say honestly you were not scared. You know you were."

"I am afraid your joke fell flat, Davie," laughed Wyn. All the girls were enjoying the boys' discomfiture. "Of course, I suppose you thought you deserved your breakfast as a forfeit because you got a trick across on us. But you'll have to try again, I am afraid. Just because we ran doesn't prove that we did not recognize the combination of a boy and a buffalo robe."

"Aw, now!" cried one of the boys. "What did you run for?"

"There's a reason," laughed Percy.

"Wait!" advised Frank, shaking her head and her own eyes dancing. "You will find out soon enough why we ran."

"'He laughs best who laughs last,'" quoted Grace. "Bears, indeed!"

The boys were puzzled. Breakfast being over the girls went about their several tasks and paid their friends of the opposite sex very little attention. To all suggestions that they get out the canoes and go across to the island with the boys, or on other junkets, the girls responded with refusals. They evidently thought they had something like a joke themselves on the boys, and finally the latter went off through the brush toward the spot where they had tied their canoes, half inclined to be angry.

They were gone a long while, and were very

quiet. The girls whispered together, and kept right near the tents, waiting for the explosion.

"At least," Wyn said, chuckling, "we gave them a good breakfast, so they won't starve to death; but if they want to go to the island they will have to swim."

"We've given them 'tit for tat,'" said Frankie, nodding her head. "Glad of it. And *they'll* pay the forfeit, instead of us."

"If they don't find the canoes," whispered Grace.

"They wouldn't find them in a week of Sundays," cried Percy.

"Then let's set them a good hard task for payment," suggested Bess.

"That's right. They oughtn't to have tried to scare us so," agreed Mina.

"I guess it is agreed," laughed Wyn, "to show them no mercy. Ah! here they come now."

The Busters slowly climbed the knoll in rather woebegone fashion. Their feathers certainly were drooped, as Frank remarked.

"Well," said Dave, throwing himself down on the sward, "we must hand it to you Go-Aheads. You've got us 'way out on the limb, and if you shake the tree very hard we'll drop off."

"No, thanks!" snapped Bess. "We don't care for green fruit."

"Oh, oh!" squealed Ferd. "I bet that hurt me."

"Now, there's no use quarreling," said Dave. "We admit defeat. Where under the sun you girls could have hidden our canoes I don't see. And your own haven't been used this morning, that's sure."

Wyn and her mates broke into uncontrollable laughter at this.

"Who's the joke on now?" cried Bess.

"What will you give to find your canoes?" exclaimed Frankie.

"Aw—say—don't rub it in," begged Tubby. "We own up to the corn. You beat us. Where are the canoes?"

"Ahem!" said Wynifred, clearing her throat loudly, and standing forth.

"Hear, hear!" cried Mina.

"Oh! you've got it all fixed up for us, I see," muttered Ferd.

"The understanding always has been," said Wyn, calmly, "that if one party succeeded in playing a practical joke on the other, and 'getting away with it,' as you slangy boys say, the party falling for the trick should pay forfeit. Isn't that so?"

"Go on! Do your worst," growled Ferd.

"That's right. You state the case clearly, Miss Mallory," said Dave, with a bow of mockery.

"And they never paid a forfeit for the time Tubby slid down our boathouse roof, plunk into the water," cried Bessie.

"Aw—that's ancient history," growled Tubby.

"Let us stick to recent events," agreed Wyn, smiling. "If we girls were at all frightened by your 'bear-faced' attempt to frighten us this morning, we have paid with a breakfast; haven't we?"

"And it was a good one," agreed Dave.

"It's made me go right to cooking again," said Bess. "A swarm of locusts would have brought about no greater devastation."

"Then, gentlemen," said Wynifred, "do you admit that the shoe is now on the other foot? You cannot find your canoes. Will you pay us to find them for you?"

"That's only fair," admitted Dave.

"Say! how do we pay you?" demanded Ferd.

"Shall I tell them what we demand, girls?" asked Wyn.

"Go ahead!" "It'll serve them right!" "They've got to do it!" were some of the exclamations from the Go-Aheads.

"Oh, let the blow fall!" groaned Dave.

"Then, gentlemen of the Busters Association,

it is agreed by the ladies of the Go-Ahead Club that while we remain in camp on Green Knoll this summer, you young gentlemen shall cut and stack all the firewood we shall need!"

"Ow-ouch!" cried Ferd.

"What a cheek!" gasped Tubby, rolling his eyes.

"*All* the firewood you use?" repeated one of the other boys. "Why—that will be cords and cords!"

"Every stick!" declared Wyn, firmly.

"And I'd be ashamed, if I were you, to complain," pursued Bessie. "If you had been gentlemanly you would have offered to cut our wood before. You know that that is the *one* thing that girls can't do easily about a camp."

"Gee! you have quite a heap of stove wood yonder," said Tubby.

"That is what Mr. Jarley cut for us," Wyn said. "But it doesn't matter what other means we may have for getting our firewood cut. Will you accept the forfeit like honorable gentlemen?"

"Why, we've *got* to!" cried Ferd.

"We're honestly caught," admitted Dave Shepard. "I'll do my share. Two of us, for half a day a week, can more than keep you supplied—unless you waste it."

"And we can have the canoes back?" demanded one of the other Busters, eagerly.

And so it was agreed—"signed, sworn to, and delivered," as Frankie said. With great glee the girls led the Busters to the steep bank by the waterside, over which a great curtain of wild honeysuckle hung. This curtain of fragrant flowers and thick vines dragged upon the ground. There was a hollow behind it that Wyn had discovered quite by chance.

And this hollow was big enough to hide the six canoes, one stacked a-top of the other. One passing by would never have suspected the hiding place, and in hiding the craft the girls had left no tell-tale footprints.

So, for once at least, the Go-Aheads got the best of the Busters.

CHAPTER XVII

VISITORS

BESSIE LAVINE had written home, as she said she would, regarding her adventure with Wyn when they were overturned by the squall, and all about Polly Jarley. But the result of this letter—and the others that went along to Denton with it—was not just what the girls had expected.

Although Mrs. Havel, in charge of the Go-Aheads, reported regularly to her brother-in-law, Percy's father, the story of the overturn made a great stir among the mothers especially, whose consent to the six girls living under canvas for the summer had been gained with such difficulty.

"What do you know about this, girls?" cried Frank, on next mail day. "My mother and father are coming out here. They can stay but one night; but they say they must see with their own eyes just how we are living here."

"And my Uncle Will is coming," announced Grace. "What do you know about *that?* Mother has made him promise to come and see if I am all right."

"*My* mother says," quoth Mina, slowly, "that she doesn't doubt Mrs. Havel does the very best she can by us; but she and papa are coming up here with Mr. and Mrs. Cameron."

Bessie began to laugh, too. "Pa's coming," she said. "It's a plot, I believe. He says he has hired the *Sissy Radcliffe,* and all of our parents can come if they like. The boat's big enough. He will bring another sleeping tent and those who wish can sleep under canvas while they remain. The boat has lots of berths in it. Say! maybe we'll have a great time."

"I expect," said Mrs. Havel, looking up and smiling, from her own letter, "that your mothers, girls, will not really be content until they see for themselves how you are getting along. So we may as well make ready for visitors. They will arrive on Saturday. Some will remain only over Sunday and return by train from the Forge. But Mr. Lavine, I believe, and some of the gentlemen, will be here on the lake for a week, or more."

"No more oversets, now, girls," said Frankie. "That's what is bringing the mothers up here."

"*My* father is coming to see if he cannot do something for Polly Jarley," declared Bessie, with emphasis.

But Wynifred Mallory was quite sure that the Lavines—no matter how good their intentions

now were toward the boatman's daughter—would find Polly rather difficult. Wyn had been down to the boatkeeper's house several times alone to see Polly; but the backwoods girl would not be shaken from her attitude. She would not come to Green Knoll Camp any more, nor would she send any word to Bess Lavine.

Bess really was sorry for what she had said and the way she had treated Polly. But the latter was obdurate.

"I don't want anything from those Lavines," she replied to Wyn's urging. "Only that Mr. Lavine should treat my father kindly. I'd pull the girl out of the lake again—sure! But I don't want her for a friend, and I don't want to be paid for doing my duty. *You* don't offer to pay me, Wynnie."

"No, dear. I couldn't pay you for saving my life," Wynifred admitted.

"Neither can they!" retorted Polly, heatedly. "They think they're so much above us, because they have money and we have none. They are like those millionaires at the other end of the lake—Dr. Shelton and the others. I don't want their money!"

But Polly's obstinacy was cutting the boatman's daughter out of a lot of fun. This fact became more pronounced, too, when the visitors

from Denton, in the *Sissy Radcliffe*, came to Green Knoll Camp.

The *Sissy* was a big motor launch, and there was a good-sized party aboard. When the ladies had once seen how the girls and Mrs. Havel lived, they were glad to take advantage of the tent Mr. Lavine brought. The gentlemen slept aboard the launch, which was anchored at night off Green Knoll Camp.

There were indeed gay times, for instead of acting as "wet-blankets" to the young folks' fun, the visitors entered into the spirit of the outing and, with the Busters and Professor Skillings from Gannet Island, made a holiday of the occasion.

Both the girls and boys "showed off" in their canoes in the shallow water under the bank, and in their bathing suits. They showed the more or less anxious parents just how skillful they were in the management of the tricky craft.

When the canoes were overturned, the girls and boys were able to right them, bail them out, and scramble aboard again. They could all swim and dive like ducks—save Bessie and Tubby. But Bessie was improving every day, and Tubby never *could* really sink, they all declared, unless he swallowed so much of the lake for ballast that he would be able to wade ashore from the middle.

It was now the height of the camping season

and the Busters and Go-Aheads, with their friends, were not the only parties along the shores of Lake Honotonka. The Jarleys were doing a good business, almost all their craft being in use most of the time. A battalion of Boy Scouts went into camp about ten miles to the west of Gannet Island and Dave and his mates had some friends among them.

Several small steamboats plied the waters of the lake with excursion parties. The people at Braisely Park often came down to Gannet Island and the neighborhood of Green Knoll in their boats. Altogether there was considerable intimacy among the campers and between them and the residents of Braisely Park.

This pleasant condition of affairs brought about the idea of the regatta, or boating sports. Some of the wealthy men at the west end of the lake arranged the events, put up the prizes for certain classes of boat trials and other aquatic sports, had the necessary printing and advertising done, and

HONOTONKA REGATTA DAY

became emblazoned on the billboards along the neighboring highways and railroad lines.

The events were entirely amateur and were confined to those actually camping on, or living on, the

shores of the lake. Arrangements went ahead with a rush, the date being set so close that most of the parents and friends who had come up with Mr. Lavine from Denton were encouraged to stay over.

Some of the Busters were going to enter for the canoeing events, and there was a girls' contest, too, that interested our friends. Bessie Lavine could paddle a canoe as well as anybody, and she was eager to take part in one or two of the races. So she got out early one morning, with Wyn and Grace, and Mr. Lavine for referee, and they did some good work.

They chanced to get well over toward the Jarley boat landing and suddenly Wyn set up a shout:

"Polly! Polly Jolly! I never knew you had a canoe. Come on over here!"

She had caught sight of the boatman's daughter paddling near the shore in an Indian canoe. It was of birchbark and Polly shot it along under the stroke of her paddle as though it had the weight of a feather. And, indeed, it was not so heavy by a good deal as the cedar boats of the Go-Ahead girls.

Polly waved her hand and turned the canoe's prow toward Wyn. Not until she was right among the other canoes did she realize that in one of them sat Bessie Lavine.

"We are very glad to see you, Polly," declared Wyn. "Are you going to enter for the girls' races?"

"Good-morning, Polly," cried Grace, equally cordial. "What a pretty boat you have!"

Polly stammered some words of welcome and then looked from Bessie to Mr. Lavine. Evidently the boatman's daughter suspected who the gentleman was.

Mr. Lavine was a pleasant enough man to meet socially. It is true that both he and his daughter were impulsive and perhaps prided themselves on being "good haters." This does not mean that they were haters of that which was good; but that if they considered anybody their enemy the enmity was not allowed to die out.

"I am glad to see you again, Polly," Bess said, driving her canoe close to that of the boatman's daughter. "Won't you speak to me at all?"

"Oh, Miss Lavine! I would not be so rude as to refuse to speak to you," Polly replied. "But —but it doesn't do any good——"

"Yes, it does, Polly," Bess said, quickly. "This is my father and he wants to thank you for saving my life."

"Indeed I do!" exclaimed Mr. Lavine, heartily. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate what you did——"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Polly, hurriedly. "I know all about that. You told me how you felt in your letter. And I'm sure I am obliged to you——"

"For what?" demanded the gentleman, smiling. "I have done nothing but acknowledge in empty phrases your bravery and good sense. I think a deal of my Bessie, and I must show you in some more substantial way how much I appreciate what you did for her."

"No, sir; you cannot do that," declared Polly, very much flushed, but with firmness, too.

"Oh, come, now! My dear girl! Don't be so offish——"

"You have thanked me sufficiently, sir," declared Polly. "If I did not know better than to accept anything more substantial myself, my father would not allow it."

"Oh, come now! Your father——"

"My father, sir, is John Jarley. He used to be your friend and partner in business. You have seen fit to spread abroad tales about him that he denies—that are untrue, sir," pursued Polly, her anger making her voice tremble.

"From you, Mr. Lavine, we could accept nothing—no charity. If we are poor, and if I have no advantages—such advantages as your daughter has, for instance—*you* are as much to blame for it as anybody."

"Oh! come now!"

"It is true. Your libelling of my father ruined his reputation in Denton. He could get no business there. And it worried my mother almost to death. So he had to come away up here into the woods."

"I really was not to blame for that, Polly," said Mr. Lavine.

"You were! Whether you realize it yourself, or not, you are the cause of all our troubles, for they began with your being angry with father over the Steel Rivet Corporation deal. I know. He's told me about it himself."

Mr. Lavine was putting a strong brake upon his temper. He was deeply grateful to Polly; but he was a proud man, too.

"Let us put aside the difference of opinion between John Jarley and myself, my dear girl," he said, quietly. "Perhaps he and I had better discuss that; not *you* and I. Bessie, I know, wishes to be your friend, and so do I. Had you not rescued her from the lake as you did, Polly, I should be mourning her death. It is a terrible thing to think of!"

Polly was silenced by this. But if she did not look actually sullen, she certainly gave no sign of giving way.

"So, my dear, you must see how strongly we

both feel. You would be doing a kind action, Polly, if you allowed Bessie to be your friend."

"That is true, Polly," cried Bessie, putting out her hand again. "Do, *do* shake hands with me. Why! I owe you my life!"

"Don't talk that way!" returned the boatman's daughter. But she gave Bess her hand. "You make too much of what I did. And I don't want to seem mean—and ungrateful.

"But, truly, you can do nothing for me. No, Mr. Lavine; there is nothing I could accept. You have wronged my father——"

He put up his hand in denial, but she went on to say:

"At least, *I* believe so. You can do nothing for me. I would be glad if you would right the wrong you did him so long ago; but I do not want you to do *that* in payment for anything I may have done for Miss Bessie.

"No, sir. Right my father's wrong because it *is* a wrong and because you realize it to be such—that you were mistaken——"

"I do not see that," Mr. Lavine returned, stiffly.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," declared Polly, and with a quick flirt of her paddle, she drove her birchbark out of the huddle of other canoes and, in half a minute, was out of earshot.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REGATTA

THE late July morning that broke upon the scene of the last preparations for Honotonka regatta promised as fine a day as heart could wish.

There was a good breeze from early morning. This was fine for the catboat races and for the sailing canoes. Yet the breeze was not too strong, and there was not much "sea." This latter fact made the paddling less difficult.

The camps on Gannet Island and at Green Knoll were deserted soon after breakfast. The Busters took their canoes aboard the *Happy Day*, while Mr. Lavine's launch, the *Sissy Radcliffe*, carried the girls' canoes as well as the girls themselves.

They were two merry boatloads, and the boats themselves were strung with banners and pennants. As they shot up the sunlit lake they sighted many other craft headed toward Braisely Park, for some contestants had come from as far away as the Forge, at the head of the Wintinooski.

Suddenly Wyn, looking through the camp spyglass, recognized the patched sail of the *Coquette,* the little catboat in which Polly Jarley had come to the rescue of the two members of the Go-Ahead Club on that memorable day.

"Polly is aboard," she told Frank Cameron, passing the glass to her friend. "But who is the boy with her?"

"That's no boy!" declared the sharp-eyed Frankie. "Why! he's got a mustache."

"It's never Mr. Jarley himself?" exclaimed Wyn, in surprise.

"That's exactly who it is."

"I didn't think they'd both leave the landing at the same time. Do you suppose they have entered the *Coquette* in the free-for-all catboat race?"

"I shouldn't wonder. She's a fast boat if she *is* old and lubberly-looking. And Dr. Shelton has offered twenty-five dollars for the winning boat."

"It takes two to work a catboat properly, too. That is the understanding," said Wyn, thoughtfully: "a crew of two."

"Hope they win the race!" declared Frank, generously.

"So do I. And they've got Polly's birch canoe

aboard. She will enter for the girls' canoe race, I am sure."

"All right," said Frank. "If you don't win the prize in *that,* my dear, then I hope Polly does."

"Why, I haven't a chance beside Bess, I am sure."

"That's all right. Bess is too erratic. One day she paddles well and the next she is 'way behind. It's her temperament. She's not a steady old warhorse like yourself, Wynnie."

"Thanks," laughed Wyn. "How about Polly? What do you call *her?*"

"I don't know. I admire her vastly," said Frank. "But Polly puzzles me. And I haven't seen her working at the paddle much. I only know that in a skiff she can outrow any of the Busters."

"I fancy she can paddle some, too. And her canoe is as light as a feather. All those birch-barks are."

"The judges may handicap her, then. But, hullo! what's that Dave Shepard up to?"

Wyn turned to look at her next-door neighbor. Dave was writing upon a slip of paper. Once he looked across at Frank and Wyn and saw that the two girls were watching him.

He seemed confused, started as though to tear

the paper up, and then hid it under a coil of rope at his feet. But he was very particular to hide every particle of the paper.

"What you doing there, Dave?" demanded Frank, with plain curiosity.

"Oh, nothing," responded the youth, and rose up, stretching his arms and yawning. It was plain that he did not wish to be questioned.

"What was that paper?" pursued Frank.

"Oh—that—er—— It's of no consequence," declared Dave, and walked aft so as not to be further questioned.

"Now, he can't fool me!" cried Frank, under her breath. "It *was* something of consequence. I—I'm going to see."

"I wouldn't," said Wyn.

"Why not?"

"Well—whatever it is, it isn't ours."

"Pooh!"

"And he evidently didn't want us to see it."

"For that very reason I am going to look," declared Frankie. And the moment Dave was out of sight she sprang across the deck and lifted up the rope enough to pull out the paper.

The moment she scanned it, Wyn saw Frankie's face turn very red. She looked angry, and stamped her foot. Then she burst into a giggle, and slid the paper back out of sight again.

She came back to her friend with a mixture of emotions expressed on her countenance. "What do you suppose?" she demanded.

"Suppose about what?" asked Wyn.

"What do you suppose Dave wrote on that paper?"

"I give it up. Something that didn't concern us, as I told you."

"You're wrong," cried Frank, divided between wrath and amusement. "And it's just the very *meanest* thing!"

"Why, you excite my curiosity," admitted Wyn.

"That's what he did it for," declared Frankie.

"*What* did he write?" cried Wyn. "Out with it."

"He wrote: 'I bet an ice-cream treat all around that your curiosity will not permit you to leave this alone.' Now! could anything be meaner?"

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Wyn.

"Don't you see? We can't claim the treat without giving ourselves away? I believe I'll join forces with Bess. There *is* nothing meaner than a boy."

"Never mind," said Wyn. "I'll find some way of making Master Dave pay for the ice-cream treat, just the same. You see if I don't."

Soon after this the launches were sent to one side so as to leave the course clear, and the races began. The men's and boys' canoe races were very interesting, and Dave Shepard won a sweater, while one of the other Busters got the second prize of a dollar for quickness in overturning and righting a canoe.

Some "funny stunts" followed in the water, and then came a girls' swimming race. Here the Go-Ahead girls excelled, although there were more than a score of entries. Wyn Mallory won a two-hundred-yard, straightaway dash, while Frank was second and Grace Hedges third in the same race. The people who had come up from Denton cheered the girls enthusiastically. When the parents who had been so afraid for their daughters' safety saw how well able the girls were to take care of themselves, their anxiety was allayed.

After these swimming contests there was an interval of two hours for refreshments. A caterer had prepared tables of sandwiches and cold drinks, as well as ice cream and cake, on one of the bigger docks belonging to Braisely Park. In fact, it was Dr. Shelton's dock.

The catboat races were to follow the intermission and Wyn found that the Jarley *Coquette* had been entered. She ran over to the dock from

which the "cats" were to start for the line, and as she approached the spot she heard loud voices and saw a little crowd of excited people.

The *Coquette* was almost the only catboat left. Dr. Shelton had backed Mr. Jarley up against a post on the wharf and, in a loud and angry voice, was telling the unfortunate boatman what he thought of him.

"*You* have the cheek to be in this race, John Jarley?" cried the angry man. "I don't mind your daughter—I pity her. But I'm hanged if I'll let a thief take part in this race—and me offering the prize. Get out of here!"

"Hold on, Shelton!" exclaimed one of his friends. "You're going too far when you call Jarley a thief."

"Or else you are not going far enough," chimed in another. "If you believe Jarley stole those images—and the boat—why don't you go about it right? Report it to the county prosecutor and have the man arrested."

"Or, if Jarley is *not* guilty," added another, "I advise him, as a lawyer, to sue you for damages."

"Let him sue and be hanged to him!" cried Dr. Shelton, who was a great, rough man, twice the size of the boatman, and with all the confidence of his great wealth, as well as his great

muscle, behind him. "But he sha'n't sail in this race."

"We'll go back home, Father—— Oh, let's go back!" cried Polly, from the cockpit of the dancing *Coquette*.

But Wyn Mallory knew that the Jarleys must have hoped to win the twenty-five dollar prize. The *Coquette* was being mentioned as a possible winner among the knowing ones about the course.

"Dr. Shelton!" she cried, tugging at the angry man's arm. "Do you mind if Polly and I sail the boat instead?"

"Eh? *You*—a girl?" grunted the doctor. "Well, why not? I've got nothing—as I said before—against his daughter. It's the man himself who has no business at this end of the lake. I sent him word so a month and more ago. I ought to have him arrested."

Win thought it would be less cruel to do so, and have the matter thrashed out in the courts. Mr. Jarley was stooping from the wharf, whispering with Polly.

"I can help her," Wyn cried, turning to the abused boatman. "Let me—do!"

"You are very kind, Miss Mallory," said Jarley.

The captain of the Go-Ahead Club leaped lightly down into the *Coquette*.

"What's our number—sixteen?" she cried. "Pay off the sheet, Polly. We're off." Then she added, in a low tone, to the weeping girl in the stern: "Don't you mind the doctor, Polly—mean old thing! We'll win the prize in spite of him—you see if we don't."

CHAPTER XIX

UNDER WHITE WINGS

ALREADY the catboats were getting off from the starting line, in rotation of numbers and about two minutes apart. The course was ten miles (or thereabout) straightaway to the stakeboat, set far out in the lake—quite out of sight from the decks of the boats about the starting point—and turning that, to beat back. The wind was free, but not too strong. The out-and-return course would prove the boats themselves and the seamanship of their crews.

Being a free-for-all race, there had been brought together some pretty odd-looking craft beside the smart, new boats belonging to dwellers in Braisely Park. But the Jarleys' boat was by no means the worst-looking.

However, it attracted considerable attention because it was the only catboat "manned" by girls.

Wynifred Mallory had done this on impulse, and it was not usual for her to act in such a way. But her parents had gone home and she had no-

body to ask permission of but Mrs. Havel—and she did not really know where the Go-Aheads' chaperone was.

Beside, there wasn't time to ask. The catboats were already getting under way. The *Coquette* was almost the last to start. Wyn was not at all afraid of the task before her, for she had helped Dave sail his cousin's catboat on the Wintinooski many times. She knew how to 'tend sheet.

The Go-Aheads and Busters recognized Wyn, and began to cheer her and Polly before the *Coquette* came to the line. Other onlookers caught sight of the two girls, and whether they knew the crew of the *Coquette* or not, gave them a good "send-off."

Polly had accepted Wyn's help quietly, but with a look that Wyn was not likely to forget. It meant much to the Jarleys if the *Coquette* won the twenty-five dollars. They needed every dollar they could honestly earn.

The boatman's daughter did not stop then to thank her friend. Instead she gave her brief, but plain, instructions as to what she was to do, and Wyn went about her work in a practical manner.

The catboat was sixteen feet over all, with its mast stepped well forward, of course, carrying a large fore-and-aft sail with gaff and boom. A single person *can* sail a cat all right; but to get

speed out of one, and manœuver quickly, it takes a sheet-tender as well as a steersman.

"Sixteen!" shouted the starter's assistant through his megaphone, and Polly brought the *Coquette* about and shot towards the starter's boat.

The boatman's girl had held off some distance from the line. Number Fifteen had just crossed and was now swooping away on her first tack toward the distant stake-boat. The momentum the *Coquette* obtained racing down to the line was what Polly wanted.

"Go!" shouted the starter, looking at his watch and comparing it with the timekeeper's.

The *Coquette* flashed past the line of motorboats and smaller craft that lined the course for some distance. The course was not very well policed and one of the small steamers, with a party of excursionists aboard, got right in the way of the racing boats.

"Look out, Wynnie!" shouted Polly. "I'm going to tack to pass those boats."

Wyn fell flat on the decked-over portion of the *Coquette,* and the boom swung across. With gathering speed the catboat flew on and on. Although her sail was patched, and she was shabby-looking in the extreme, the *Coquette* showed her heels that day to many handsomer craft.

The various boats raced with each other—first one ahead, and then another. There were not many important changes in the positions of the contesting boats, however, until the stake-boat was reached.

But Number Sixteen passed Thirteen, Fifteen, and Twelve for good and all, before five miles of the course were sailed. The *Coquette*, when once she had dropped an opponent behind, never was caught by it.

Wyn was on the *qui vive* every moment. She sprang to obey Captain Polly's commands, and the latter certainly knew how to sail a catboat. She never let an advantage slip. She tacked at just the right time. Yet she sailed very little off the straight course.

The motor boats and steamboats came hooting after the racing catboats that their passengers might have a good view of the contest. These outside boats were a deal of a nuisance, and two of the tail-enders in the race dropped out entirely because of the closeness of the pleasure boats' pursuit.

"But they couldn't win anyway," Polly confided to Wynifred. "Get a bucket of water, dear. Dip it right up. That's right! Now throw it on the sail. Another! Another! It will hold the wind better if it is wet."

THE *COQUETTE* SHOT OVER THE COURSE LIKE A GREAT, SWOOPING BIRD. *Page 212.*

"What a scheme!" cried Wyn. "Oh, Polly! I wish you lived in Denton and went to our school and belonged to the Go-Ahead Club."

But Polly only shook her head. That was beyond the reach of possibility for her, she believed. But she thanked Wyn for suggesting it.

Neither girl let her attention to the present business fail, however. They were on their mettle, being the only girls in the race.

Some of the other crews had jollied them at the start; but the old *Coquette* passed first one and then another of the competing boats, and none of the other craft passed her.

Because of the fact that the boats had started about two minutes apart it was rather difficult to tell which was really winning. The leading boats were still far ahead when the Coquette rounded the stake-boat.

Polly took the turn as shortly as any craft in the race—and as cleanly. The *Coquette* made a long leg of her first tack, then a short one. Whereas it seemed as though at first the other craft were crowding Polly and Wyn close, in a little while the *Coquette* was shown to be among the flock of leading craft!

"Only Numbers One, Three, Four, Seven, and Nine ahead of us, Polly Jolly!" reported Wynifred. "And we're Sixteen! Why, it's wonder-

ful! We are sailing two lengths to one of some of them, I verily believe!"

"But Conningsby's *Elf*, and the *Pretty Sue* are good sailers—I've watched 'em," said Polly. "And the *Waking Up* is splendidly manned. If our sail would only hold the wind! It's a regular old sieve."

Wyn splashed bucket after bucket of water into the bellying sail. On the long tacks the *Coquette* shot over the course like a great, swooping bird. When she passed near one of the excursion boats the spectators cheered the two girls vociferously.

Half-way back to the starting boat the *Happy Day*, into which the Go-Aheads and all the Busters had piled, shot alongside the racing catboat manned by the two girls, and from that point on their friends "rooted" for the *Coquette*.

The *Coquette* passed Numbers Seven and Nine; it did seem as though she must have sailed the course fast enough to bring her well up among the leaders, so many higher numbers than her own had been passed.

But Wyn and Polly were not sure, when they crossed the line, how they stood in the race.

CHAPTER XX

THE CANOE RACE

DAVE SHEPARD, at the wheel of the *Happy Day,* ran directly behind the judges' boat and stopped.

"Who won?" cried the boys, in chorus. "Where does Number Sixteen stand?"

"How can we tell you until all the boats are in?" returned one of the gentlemen, smiling.

"Of course we know," declared Dr. Shelton. "And you are quite right to cheer them, boys. The *Coquette* is 'way ahead of everything else—those two girls are corkers!"

Instantly the Busters and the Go-Aheads began to cheer anew. The older members of their party aboard the *Sissy Radcliffe* took up the chorus. Wyn Mallory and Polly Jarley had beaten out the other catboats in the dingy old craft, and had won the twenty-five-dollar prize.

"It's all for you, dear," cried Wyn, when Polly kissed and thanked her. "Of course I don't need the money, while you and your father do. You'll take it from me—for friendship's sake, dear?"

"Yes, Wyn. From *you,*" returned the boatman's daughter, with trembling lips.

"And now you are coming to try for the canoe prize, too? That will be a five-dollar gold piece. But you will have to fight all us Go-Ahead girls for it. I shall beat you myself, if I can," laughed Wynifred.

Dave had rushed the motor boat over to the landing and he got Wyn's and Polly's canoes into the water. The whistle had blown for the girls' canoe race the minute before, and the other girls were out on the lake.

Altogether there were forty-three canoes. Some were birchbarks like Polly's; but the large majority were cedar boats.

"Birchbarks line up at Dr. Shelton's landing!" bellowed the starter's voice through his megaphone. "Get me? Shelton's landing!"

Polly and the few other girls who had the Indian canoes waved their hands and got into position. They kept a pretty straight line.

"Now at the starting line here for you cedars!" cried the man, and Wyn, with her five mates, and the rest of the girl canoeists from all about the lake, tried to obey the command.

But there were so many of them that it was not altogether easy to get into line. Nearly forty canoes were "some bunch," to quote the slangy

Frank, who was, by the way, just as eager as any of the other contestants.

Although Frank believed that Wyn, and perhaps Bess, as well as Polly and Grace, had a better chance than *she* of winning the race; there was, of course, a chance of the very best canoeist getting a spill and so being put out of the race.

It is not always the best paddler who wins; there is too much uncertainty in handling the "tippy" craft—especially in moments of excitement, and among many other similar craft.

So there was hope for any and all. The eager faces of the girls in the canoes showed it. They scuffled somewhat to get place on the line; but the entries had all been numbered, so it was merely a case of getting in right and leaving enough space on either side of one's bobbing canoe.

One of the starters was pulled up and down the line in a skiff to criticise. Not every girl was as fair-minded to her opponents as the girls from Green Knoll Camp, and there was some little bickering before the starter shouted for the whole crowd—both cedars and birches—to get ready.

"At the shot, remember," he cried through the megaphone. "Once around the stake-boat, to the right, and return. The birchbarks finish at this line, like the cedars. Now!"

A moment later the pistol shot rang out. There

was a splash of paddles—even a clash of them, for some of the girls were too near each other and too eager.

The spectators cheered—the boys from Gannet Island doing especially well in that line. They were determined to root indiscriminately for the girls of Green Knoll Camp.

But within a very few minutes Dave Shepard shouted to his friends:

"Look what's coming up, fellows! See Polly!"

"Polly Jolly!" yelled the excitable Ferd. "Is that her in the first birchbark?"

"Of course it is," responded Tubby Blaisdell. "Well! did you ever see a girl like that before? Look at those arms. She's got better biceps than *you* have, Dave, m' boy!"

For the girls were in their bathing dresses and Polly's bare arms were displayed to the best advantage as she flashed past the motor boat. Her face was set—her eyes bright. And she weaved back and forth as she drove the paddle with the steadiness of a machine.

"Hooray for Polly Jolly!" yelled Ferd Roberts, again.

The Busters took up the chorus. They could not restrain their enthusiasm, for the pace at which Polly was overhauling the cedar boats was really marvelous.

Of course, it was a foregone conclusion that some of the contestants would drop out. These canoes Polly passed as though they were standing still.

In the lead were Wyn, Bess, Grace, Frank, and half a dozen other girls from about the lake. There were already two spills, and several slight collisions followed. The handicap on the birch canoes was really greater than was expected, for being in the rear, they had to dodge all the overset boats and the other paddlers who did not know enough to keep out of the course.

But Polly Jarley had taken the outside and she shot by all the trouble easily. She was soon clinging to the skirts of the head canoes and it looked, before the turn, as though she would soon be in the lead herself.

Up ahead Wyn and Bess and Grace were struggling almost neck and neck with two strange girls. The captain of the Go-Aheads wanted to win—she wanted to do so very much. She was a good sport, and therefore a good loser; but that does not necessarily mean that one *likes* to lose.

Bessie Lavine was paddling splendidly for her—it was evidently one of her good days. Frank Cameron had fallen behind—indeed, she had clashed with another girl and both were out of the race.

Grace Hedges was almost as big and strong as Polly Jarley; but she lacked the training of the boatman's daughter. Polly was used to hard work every day of her life. That is different from gym. work and a little paddling, or swimming, or other athletic fun a few times a week.

But Grace was doing finely and she even might have won had she not tried unwisely to pass one of her rivals. Her paddle clashed with that of the other girl. Both canoeists were straining hard—and their tempers were a bit strained, too.

"I wish you'd look where you're going, Miss!" snapped the other girl, and before Grace could return the compliment—had she so wished—the two canoes crashed together and both girls were spilled into the lake.

There was no danger in these spills. Two motor boats followed behind and picked up the swamped contestants.

But before Grace was picked up she saw Polly Jarley flash by in the birchbark. There were but three cedar boats ahead of the boatman's daughter, and all were coming down the return course, the paddlers straining to do their very best.

Wyn had a splendid, even stroke; Bess was getting heated, and bit her lip as she paddled. It always hurt Bess when she lost. Up from the rear Polly urged her birchbark with long, steady heaves

that seemed to prove her magnificent muscles tireless.

The spectators began to shout for the boatman's daughter. They saw that she was making a magnificent attempt to win the race.

But when Wyn heard them shouting for another number rather than her own—she did not notice which!—she put forth every ounce of spare strength she possessed.

Bess was left behind by the captain of the Go-Ahead Club. Her canoe quivering, her paddle actually bending under her work, Wyn dashed on. Bess and the other girl were out of the race—hopelessly. It lay between Wyn and the birchbark canoe.

Polly did not withhold her paddle when she saw her friend dart ahead; it was a perfectly fair race. But the boatman's girl had done so well at first, considering her handicap and all, that there was little wonder if she could not keep up the gruelling work. She had no reserve force, as Wyn had.

The latter dashed over the mark with undiminished speed. Polly only halted long enough to congratulate her.

"It's dear of you to be glad, Polly, when I know you wanted the prize," cried Wyn. "But we couldn't both have it."

"You have helped me enough to-day, Wynifred," replied Polly, softly. "Now father and I will go home. He told me how it would be, if he came down here; but at least we won the big prize, thanks to you, and money means so much to us now!"

The day was not over yet for the Go-Aheads and the Busters, although the races were finished. Somehow the news was spread among the campers on Gannet Island and Green Knoll that there was to be a "grand treat" at the ice-cream tables, and they gathered "like eagles to the kill," Frankie poetically declared.

The waiter brought heaping dishes of cream, there were nice cakes, and Tubby's unctuous smile at one end of the table radiated cheer. They were all very jolly and nobody asked who was to pay the piper until the waiter gravely brought Dave Shepard the check and a slip of paper.

"Hi! did *I* order this feed?" demanded Dave, startled by the size of the check.

"I was ordered to give the check to you—and the paper," quoth the waiter, calmly.

"Gee, Dave! somebody's stung you!" croaked Tubby, with his mouth still full.

Dave unfolded the paper slowly, and read in his own handwriting: "I bet an ice-cream treat all

around to the Go-Ahead girls that your curiosity would not permit you to leave this alone."

"You don't deny your own handwriting; do you, sir?" queried the waiter, with a perfectly grave face. "I served the company on that order, Mr. Shepard."

"That Wyn Mallory! She got me!" groaned Dave, and paid up like a man.

"But what's the use of trying to put a joke over on those girls?" he said to Tubby afterward. "They're always turning the tables on a fellow."

"Very good table, too—very good table," agreed Tubby, smacking his lips. "But you're so reckless with your promises, Dave."

Mr. Lavine's man took the *Happy Day* and the canoes back to camp, while the whole party of young folk piled aboard the larger *Sissy*. They had a fine time sailing down the lake and reached the Cave-in-the-Wood Camp at late supper time.

There was still light enough on the water for the voyagers to see a boat rocking on the waves in the little cove where Polly Jarley had first been introduced to the two canoe clubs.

"And that's Polly and her father there now," said Dave, quickly.

"Yes. It's the *Coquette*," agreed Wyn.

"What are they doing in there?" asked

Frankie. "See! he is standing up and gesticulating—not to us. He's talking to Polly."

"That is the place where he had the misfortune to lose Dr. Shelton's motor boat last winter," said Wyn. "Don't you remember?"

"You see," Dave cried, "he is showing her the place where the limb fell again—and the direction the boat must have taken in the fog."

"A lot *he* knows where it went," said Tubby, scornfully. "He was swept overboard, and as far as he knows the *Bright Eyes* might have gone right up into the air!"

"But it didn't explode, you see, nor did it have wings," laughed Wynifred. "So it took no aërial voyage—we may be sure of that. I'd give anything to find where it sank."

"So would I, Wyn," cried Dave. "If we could locate the sunken boat, Mr. Jarley could easily prove he had neither stolen it nor the silver images."

"I'd give something handsome to have the mystery explained, myself," said Mr. Lavine, suddenly.

"What would you give, Father?" asked his daughter.

"I'll tell you," he replied, smiling. "I understand both of your clubs—the Go-Aheads and the Busters—are anxious to really *own* a motor boat.

Frank Dumont, here, tells me he has got to go home with the *Happy Day* to-morrow, as his vacation is ended.

"Now, I'll make you boys and girls an offer," pursued Mr. Lavine, more earnestly. "You'll hunt in packs, anyway—the boys together and the girls together. If the girls find the sunken boat I'll present them with a motor boat as good as the *Happy Day;* and if the boys have the luck, then the boat shall belong to the Busters. What say?"

"We say 'Thanks!'" cried Dave, instantly.

"*We* think it is very handsome of you, sir," declared Wyn, coming over to the gentleman and taking his hand. "And I know why you do it, sir—so I thank you twice. If poor Mr. Jarley could be absolved of Dr. Shelton's accusation, it would help a whole lot."

"Humph!" muttered Mr. Lavine, "I heard Shelton going on about Jarley myself to-day, and it made me ashamed—I'm free to own it. I never *did* think John as bad as all that!"

"It sounds different when you hear somebody else say it," whispered Dave in Wynifred's ear.

Mr. Lavine's proposal, however, met with enthusiastic favor on the part of both clubs. A motor boat would be just the finest thing to own! Both boys and girls determined to find the lost *Bright Eyes* before the season was out.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAY OF THE WIND

"DID you know," said Professor Skillings, visiting Camp Green Knoll with the Busters several days later, "that there are several thousand Poles in the Wintinooski Valley?"

"You surprise me," remarked Mrs. Havel.

"Fine things to grow beans on, Professor," declared Dave, coming up with a brimming bucket of water from the spring.

"Not the right kind of poles, my boy—not the right kind of poles," said the professor, smiling gently, and offering Mrs. Havel a cocoanut-cup of the sparkling water. "You see what a misunderstanding of terms will do," the professor added, in his argumentative way. "A little knowledge—especially a little scientific knowledge—is a dangerous thing."

"You are right, Professor," cried Tubby, who was within hearing distance. "Did you hear about what Dr. Mackenzie's servant girl did?"

"Dr. Mackenzie is very erudite," commented the professor, dreamily.

"That's right. Anyhow, the girl heard a lot of talk about bugs, and grubs, and germs, and the like—and it proves just what Professor Skillings says about the danger of knowing a little science."

"How's that, Tubby?" queried one of the interested young folk.

"Why, one day the doctor's wife asked this servant for a glass of water, and the girl brought it.

"'It has a very peculiar taste, Mary,' said Mrs. Mackenzie.

"'Sure, ma'am, it's all right, ma'am. There ain't a germ in it, for I ran it through the colander before I brought it to you, ma'am!' says Mary. Oh, Mary had picked up some scientific notions, all right, all right!"

"I believe there would be more breeze up on Windmill Farm," observed Wynifred Mallory.

"Wish I was up there, then," growled Tubby, who had quite collapsed after telling his joke.

"Let's go!" suggested Frankie.

"There will be plenty of wind bye and bye," said Dave, thoughtfully eyeing the clouds on the horizon.

"Listen to the weather prophet," scoffed Ferdinand.

"I tell you!" cried Frankie, jumping up. "Let's go up into the windmill and see how far

one can really *see* from that height. The farmer's wife says it is a great view—doesn't she, Wyn?"

"I'm game," responded Wyn. "We'll be no warmer walking than we are sitting here talking about the heat."

She and Frankie and Dave started off ahead; but Tubby would not come, nor would Grace Hedges. The others, however, saw some prospect of amusement and were willing to pay the price.

They began to be paid for their walk as soon as they came out into the open fields of Windmill Farm. A little breeze had sprung up and, although it was fitful at first, it soon grew to a steady wind from across the lake.

The distant haze was dissipated, and when the boys and girls reached the top of the hill they were glad they had come.

"I bet we have a storm bye and bye," Dave said. "But isn't the air up here cool?"

"Let's climb up into the loft," Frank urged. "The farmer's wife said we could."

"They're all away from home to-day," Wyn said. "But I don't believe they will mind. When we came up for the milk this morning Mrs. Prosser told us they were going on a Sunday school picnic."

"I'd like to set the old thing to working,"

remarked the inquisitive Ferdinand. "What do you know about it, Dave?"

"It starts by throwing in this clutch," replied the bigger boy, just inside the door. "If the wind keeps on the farmer will probably grind a grist when he comes back. You see, there are several bags of corn and wheat yonder."

The girls were already finding their way up the dusty ladders, from loft to loft of the tower. Frank got to the top floor first and called out her delight at the view.

"Come on up!" she cried. "There is plenty of room. It's bigger up here than you think—and the breeze is nice. There are two windows, and that makes a fine draught."

The boys trooped up behind the Go-Aheads—all but Ferdinand. But none of them missed him for some minutes.

What a view was obtained from the window of the mill! The whole panorama of Lake Honotonka and its shores, with a portion of the Wintinooski Valley, lay spread like a carpet at their feet—woods and fields, cultivated land in the foreground, the rocky ridges of Gannet Island, Jarley's Landing, the Forge, the steep shore of the lake beyond the Wintinooski, and so around to the fine houses in Braisely Park and the smoke of the big city to the west.

In the midst of their exclamations there came a sudden jar through the heavily-timbered building that startled them.

"What's that?" cried Mina.

"An earthquake!" laughed Frankie.

"It's the sails!" yelled Dave, starting for the ladder. "What are you doing down there, Ferd?"

The groaning and shaking continued. The arms of the windmill were going round and round —every revolution increasing their speed.

"Stop that, Ferd!" shouted Dave again, starting to descend the ladder.

"Isn't that just like a boy?" demanded Bess, in disgust. "He just *had* to fool with the machinery."

"What do you suppose the miller will say?" queried Wyn, anxiously.

The roar of the whirling arms almost drowned their voices. The wind had increased to a brisk breeze. With the sails so well filled the arms turned at top-notch speed. The tower shook as though it were about to tumble down.

"Oh, dear me!" moaned Mina, the timid one. "Let us get out of here."

"Why doesn't Dave make him stop it?" shouted Frankie.

"Why doesn't the foolish Ferd stop it himself?" was Wyn's demand.

The other boys were already tumbling down the ladder, and the girls followed as fast as possible. It was rather dark below, and when they came to the ground floor, it was full of dancing dust-particles. Dave and Ferd were busy over the machinery near the door.

"Can't you stop it, Dave?" shrieked Percy.

"The confounded thing is broken!" announced Dave, in disgust.

"Goodness me!" cried Frank. "I want to get out of here."

She started for the door; but Wyn grabbed her just in time. Past the open door whirled the sails of the mill—one after the other—faster and faster. And so close were the sails to the doorway that there was not room for the very smallest of the Go-Ahead girls to get out without being struck.

Dave stared around at the others. It was almost impossible to hear each other speak—and what was there to say? Each boy and girl realized the situation in which Ferd's meddling had placed them.

Until the wind subsided they were prisoners in the tower.

Ferd Roberts subsided into a corner, and hid his

face in his hands. He had done something that scared his inquisitive soul to the very bottom.

He had started the sails, and then, in trying to throw out the clutch, he had started the millstones as well. *They* made most of this noise that almost deafened them.

Finally, however, Dave pushed the power belt from the flywheel, and the stones stopped turning; but there was no way of stopping the sails. To step outside the door was to court instant death, and until the wind stopped blowing it seemed as though there would be no escape.

"And the wind blows sometimes two or three days at a stretch!" cried Frankie.

"It's lucky Tubby isn't up here with us," Dave said, grimly. "He would want to cast lots at once to see which one of the party should be eaten first."

"Ugh! don't joke like that, Dave," begged Mina. "Maybe we *will* be dreadfully hungry before we get out of this place."

"I'm hungry now," announced Frankie.

"It *is* near time for luncheon," agreed Wyn.

"'Luncheon'! Huh!" ejaculated Dave. "I s'pose that's the feminine of 'lunch.' I could eat a stack of pancakes and a whole can of beans right now. I'm too hungry for any mere 'luncheon.'"

"Oh, dear! It's so hot down here," sighed

Percy. "If we've got to stay, let's go upstairs again, where there is some air stirring."

"Let's wave a signal from the window. Maybe somebody will see it and come to our rescue," suggested Frank.

"And what could they do?" demanded Wyn. "These sails can't be stopped from the outside; can they, Dave?"

"Not that I know of," replied Dave. "If there was a tree near, a fellow might tie a kedge rope to it, and then throw the kedge over one of the arms. But that would tear the machinery all to pieces, I suppose, it would stop it with such a jerk."

Just then Mina Everett uttered a shrill cry of alarm. "Look! Look!" she cried. "It's afire! We'll burn up in here! Oh, oh, Wynnie! what shall we do?"

The others turned, aghast. There *was* blue smoke spurting out around the shaft above their heads.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRISONERS OF THE TOWER

"FIRE!" cried Percy Havel. "Oh! what *shall* we do?"

"Well, your yelling about it won't put it out," snapped Frank.

But Dave Shepard had sprung up the ladder and immediately announced the trouble.

"The axle is getting overheated. See that can of oil yonder, Ferd? Come out of your trance and do something useful, boy! Quick! hand me the can."

But it was Wyn who got it to him. Dave quickly refilled the oil cups and squirted some of the lubricant into the cracks about the shaft. The smoke immediately drifted away.

"The rest of you go up where it's cooler," he commanded. "I will remain here and play engineer. And for goodness' sake, pray for the wind to die down!"

The situation was really serious; nobody among the prisoners of the tower knew what to do.

While the wind swung the arms of the mill

round and round, there was no chance to get out. Not that they did not all cudgel their brains within the next hour to that end. There were enough suggestions made to lead to a dozen escapes; only —none of the suggestions were practical.

It was less noisy, now that Dave had stopped the millstones; but the building continued to tremble, and the great wheel to creak.

"What a donkey the man was to let them cut his door right behind the arms," exclaimed Frankie.

"And with no proper means of stopping the sails from inside, once the wind began to blow," added Percy.

"No. That's my fault," admitted Ferdinand. "I broke the gear some way."

"Well, if we only had an axe," said one of the other boys, "we might cut our way out of the building on the side opposite the door."

But Dave had already searched the mill for tools. There wasn't even a rope. Had there been, they could have let themselves down from the high window to the ground.

"It should be against the law to build windmills without proper fire-escapes," declared Frank, trying to laugh.

But it was hard to joke about the matter. It looked altogether too serious.

The wind continued to blow steadily—a little harder, indeed, as time passed; but the sun grew hotter. It came noon, and they knew that those at Green Knoll Camp had long since expected them back.

Finally a figure appeared upon the path far down the hill. They recognized Tubby Blaisdell trudging painfully up the slope in the hot sun, evidently an unwilling messenger from Mrs. Havel and Professor Skillings.

They began to shout to Tubby, although they knew very well it was useless. He couldn't have heard their voices down there, even if the windmill hadn't made so much noise.

But the girls fluttered their hats from the window and, bye and bye, the stolid fat youth, glancing up while he mopped his brow, caught sight of the signals. He halted, glared up at the window from under his hand, and then hurried his steps.

"Oh, you Tubby!" shouted Frank, at last, thrusting her tousled curls out of the window. "Can't you help us?"

He heard these words, and looked more bewildered than ever.

"Say! what do you want?" he bellowed up at them. "Don't ask me to climb up those ladders, for I can't. And Mrs. Havel and the prof. say

for you to come back to camp. They think a storm is coming. Besides—aren't you hungry?"

"Hungry! why, Tub," yelled down Ferd, "if we could only get at you, we'd eat you alive!"

Tubby looked more than a little startled, and glanced behind him to see that the way of retreat was clear.

"Well, why don't you come down and get your lunch, then?" demanded young Blaisdell.

"We can't," said Wyn, and she explained their predicament.

"Can't stop those sails?" gasped Tubby. "Why—why— Where's the man who owns the old contraption?"

They explained further. Tubby went around to the other side and caught a glimpse of Dave playing engineer. The chums shouted back and forth to each other for some time.

Tubby wanted to see if he couldn't stop the sails by making a grab at them.

"You do it, Tubby, and the blamed things will throw you a mile through the air," declared Dave. "Besides, we don't want to smash the farmer's mill. We have done enough harm as it is. So, there's no use in backing one of those heavy wagons into it and wrecking the sails. No. I guess we've got to stand it here for a while."

They heard one of the girls calling, and Tubby

lumbered around to see Frankie gesticulating from the window.

"Oh, Tubby! don't leave us to starve—and we're so *awfully* thirsty, too," cried Wyn, pushing her friend to one side. "Get us a bucket of water from the well, first of all."

"Gee! how am I going to get it up to you—throw it?" cackled the fat youth.

"You get the bucket—and a rope," commanded Wyn.

"But if he can throw a rope up to us, we can get out of this fix," Ferdinand cried. "Can't we, Dave?" he asked of his captain, who had come up the ladders for a breath of fresh air.

"Tubby couldn't throw a coil of rope for a cent. He couldn't learn to use a lasso, you know."

"And we girls could not get down on a rope," objected Bess.

"We could lower you," Ferd declared.

"It would have to be a pretty strong rope," said Dave. "And maybe there isn't anything bigger than clothes line about the farm."

Which proved to be the case. At least, Tubby could find nothing else and finally brought the brimming bucket and the line he had found on the drying green behind the farmhouse.

"I can't throw the thing up so high," complained Tubby, after two or three attempts.

"Wait!" commanded Wyn.

"Hold on! Wynnie's great mind is at work."

"Everybody sit down and unlace his or her shoes. I want the lacings," declared Wynifred.

"Hurray!" exclaimed Ferd. "Wait a bit, Tubby; don't wear your poor little self to a grease spot trying to throw that rope over the mill."

Tubby, nothing loath, sat down and breathed heavily. The day *was* hot in spite of the high wind.

Wyn got all the shoe strings and tied them together, with a bolt fastened to the lower end for a sinker, and let it down to the ground. There Tubby attached the end of the clothes line and they pulled it up. It was long enough, and strong enough, and Dave carefully raised the bucket of water—and oh! how good it tasted to the thirsty prisoners.

They were all provided with cups, for the Academy teachers and the Denton mothers were rather insistent on that point.

"But, oh, golly!" burst forth Frank, "if they'd only made us always carry an emergency ration."

"We didn't expect to be cast away on a desert island in this fashion," said Dave.

But Wyn had another idea.

"There are melons on the back porch. I saw

them there this morning. Go get us a lot, Tubby. Send 'em up by the bucket-full. And there are tomatoes in the garden, and some summer apples on that tree by the fence corner. We'll make it all right with Mrs. Prosser. Why, say! we sha'n't starve."

"I'll get you some eggs if you want 'em," suggested the willing youth. "I hear the hens cackling."

But all objected to raw eggs and thought the melons and fresh tomatoes would suffice.

"You go back to camp and report," ordered Dave, through the window. "The prof. and Mrs. Havel will be having conniption fits if these girls don't show up pretty soon. Tell 'em we're all right—but goodness knows we want the wind to stop blowing."

It did not seem, however, as though the wind had any such intention. After Tubby Blaisdell departed it blew even stronger.

It was hard to keep the whole party in good temper. The imprisonment was getting on their nerves. Besides, the sky was growing darker, although it was not yet mid-afternoon; and not long after the fat youth was out of sight, heavy drops of rain began to fall.

Rather, the wind whipped the raindrops in at the tower window. Patter, patter, patter, they

fell, faster and faster, and in the distance thunder rumbled.

The picnicking farmers should be home ahead of this storm; yet, if they came, they could not stop the sails of the windmill. The shaft groaned and smoked, but Dave kept the oil cups filled.

Nearer and nearer came the thunder, and the lightning began to flash. Some of the girls were frightened. Nor was this a pleasant place in which to be imprisoned during an electrical storm. The tall, revolving arms seemed just the things to attract the lightning.

They all were glad—boys as well as girls—to retire to the ground floor of the mill while the elements shrieked overhead and the rain pounded upon the roof and the sails. It was really a most unpleasant situation.

CHAPTER XXIII

WYN HITS SOMETHING

In the midst of the storm a voice hailed them from outside. Dave went to the doorway and saw—through the falling rain—Farmer Prosser, standing by his horses' heads. He had just brought his family home from the picnic and they had scurried into the house.

"What are you doing in there?" demanded the farmer. "Can't you stop the sails?"

Dave explained, making it as light for Ferd as possible.

"Well! I've been expecting something like this ever since the mill was put up. We can't do anything about it now. But I believe the wind will shift soon. And if it does, perhaps I can stop the sails from outside here."

It was nearly dark, however, and quite suppertime, before the farmer's prophecy came true. Then the rain suddenly ceased to fall (the thunder and lightning had long since rolled away into the distance) and the wind dropped.

The farmer and his man rigged a brake to fall

against the narrow breadth of shaft which extended outside of the mill wall, and so brought pressure to bear upon the revolving axle. This helped bring the sails to a stop.

How thankfully the Go-Aheads and the Busters got out of that tower, it would be difficult to express. Professor Skillings had started up through the rain to see what he could do; but on the way he had picked up a white pebble washed out of the roadside by the rain, and there being something peculiar about it, he stopped under a hedge to examine it by the light of his pocket lamp. Then he must needs proceed with his ever-present geological hammer to break the stone in two. Long after dark his electric lamp was flashing down there on the hillside like some huge wavering firefly.

Not that he could have done a thing to help his young friends. Mrs. Prosser, the farmer's wife, had the most practical idea of anybody; for, the minute the boys and girls were out of the mill, she insisted that they troop into the farmhouse kitchen and there sit down to her long table and "get outside of" great bowls of milk and bread, with a host of ginger cookies on the side.

So the incident ended happily after all, though Ferdinand Roberts's spirits drooped for several days. It was well for him to suffer in

spirit—as Frankie said: it might teach him a lesson. And he had to pay the farmer for the damage he had done to the machinery.

Ferdinand never had any money. He spent his allowance in advance, borrowing of the other Busters whenever he could. When he got money from home he had to sit down and apportion it all out to his creditors, and then had to begin borrowing again.

He had hard work scraping together the wherewithal to pay Mr. Prosser; but the boys made it up for him, and the girls would have helped—only Dave Shepard had instilled it into Ferd's mind that it was not honorable to borrow from a girl.

However, having cleaned his own pocket and strained his credit to the snapping point, Ferdinand was over at the Forge with Tubby a couple of days afterward and beheld something in a store window that he thought he wanted.

"Oh, Tubby!" he cried. "Lend me half a dollar; will you? I must have that."

Tubby looked at him out of heavy-lidded eyes, and croaked: "Snow again, brother; I don't get your drift!"

When Ferd went from one to the other of his mates they all refused—if not quite as slangily as the fat youth. Ferd found himself actually a pau-

per, with all lines of credit shut to him. It made him serious.

"If all you fellows, and the old prof., should suddenly die on me up here—what would I do?" gasped Ferd. "Why—I'd have to walk home!"

"Or swim," said Dave, heartlessly. "You'd pawn your canoe, I s'pose."

Speaking of swimming, that was an art in which several of the boys, as well as Bessie Lavine and Mina Everett, needed practice. Beside the early morning dip, both clubs often held swimming matches either at Green Knoll Camp, or off the boys' camp on Gannet Island.

The boys built a good diving raft and anchored it in deep water after much hard work. The good swimmers among the girls—especially Wyn and Grace—liked to paddle over to the raft and dive from it.

Late in the afternoon the Go-Aheads had come to the raft in their canoes dressed only in their bathing suits, and found that the boys had gone off on some excursion, and that even Professor Skillings was not in sight at Cave-in-the-Wood Camp.

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Bess, with satisfaction. "Now we can have a good time without those trifling boys bothering us. I'm going to learn to dive properly, Wyn."

"Sure," returned her friend and captain, encouragingly. "Now's the time," and she gave Bess a good deal of attention for some few minutes.

The other girls disported themselves in the deep water to their vast enjoyment. Bessie learned a good bit about diving and finally sat upon the edge of the float to rest.

Wyn dived overboard.

She had taken a long slant out from the float, but once under the surface she turned and went deeper. She was like an otter in the water, and having stuffed her ears with cotton she felt prepared to remain below a long time.

Once she had opened her eyes while diving with Bess, and she thought she saw a shadowy something on the bottom of the lake that was neither a boulder nor a waterlogged snag.

She beat her way to the bottom as rapidly as possible; but the light did not follow her. She could see nothing when she opened her eyes. It seemed as though something overshadowed her.

The water was tugging at her; she could not remain below for long. But as she turned to drift up again, her shoulder touched something. She struck out and reached it. But the blow really

pushed her away and she floated upward toward the surface.

When she paddled to the raft she was panting, and Frank demanded:

"What's the matter, Wyn? You look as if you'd seen a ghost. I believe you stay down too long."

"No," gasped Wyn. "I—I hit something."

"What was it?"

"Why—why, it looked like a wagon. 'Twas something."

"I suppose so!" laughed Frank. "Wagon with a load of hay on it—eh?"

Wyn said nothing more. She sat upon the float, with her knees drawn up and hugged in her brown arms, and thought. The other girls could get nothing out of her.

She wasn't dreaming, however. She was thinking to a serious purpose.

It *had* looked like a wagon—as much as it looked like anything else. But, of course, she had seen it very dimly. She knew by the touch that it was of wood; but it was no waterlogged tree, although there was slime upon it. It was not rough; but smooth.

Of course, it wasn't a wagon. Nor was it a huge box. Neither wagon nor box could have

got out here, fifteen or twenty rods off Gannet Island.

Wyn glanced over toward the island and saw that she could look right into the cove where John Jarley had met with his accident. According to the boatman's story, as he went overboard from the motor boat he gave the wheel a twist that should have shot her directly out of the cove toward the middle of the lake.

"But suppose the boat didn't respond, after all, to the twist of the wheel?" Wyn was thinking. "Or, suppose the slant of the rudder was not as great as he supposed?"

She fixed in her mind about the spot where the thing lay she had hit, and then glanced back to the tree on the bank of the cove, that showed the long scar where the branch was torn off.

The line between the two was clear. The motor boat might have run out exactly on that course and missed the wooded point which guarded the entrance to the cove.

Suppose the thing she had hit when she dived was the *Bright Eyes,* Dr. Shelton's lost motor boat?

Wyn was about to shout to the other girls—to call them around her to divulge the idea that had come into her mind—when a hail from the water announced the return of the Busters.

She remembered Mr. Lavine's promise. The two clubs were rivals in this matter. Wouldn't it be a fine thing for the Go-Aheads to own a motor boat all by themselves!

Wyn got up and dived again. But she did not dive toward the mysterious something that she had previously found. She swam stoutly instead to meet the coming Busters.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE NIGHT ALARM

WYN MALLORY had "another mind," as the saying is, before the Go-Aheads left the island and paddled swiftly for their own camp.

She determined not to say anything to her girl friends of the club about the sunken object she had hit under the water. Perhaps it was nothing of any consequence; then they would laugh at her. If it *was* the lost motor boat, to tell the girls might spread the story farther than it ought to be spread at once.

The Go-Aheads and the Busters were rivals. Mr. Lavine had promised the prize to whichever club found the sunken boat and the box of silver images that Dr. Shelton had accused John Jarley of stealing.

"And it may not be anything, after all," thought Wyn. "It may be a false alarm. Then the *boys* would have the laugh on us."

To make sure of what she had hit when she dived seemed to Wyn to be the principal thing.

And how could she make sure of this without going down specially to examine the mystery?

"How under the sun am I going to do that without the boys seeing me?" she mused. "And if I take the girls into my confidence they will all want to be there, too—and then sure enough the Busters will catch us at it. Dear me! I don't know what to do—really."

She had half a mind to take Frank into her confidence; but, then, Frank was such a joker. The girls and boys had often talked about hunting for the missing motor boat; but since Mr. Lavine had gone back to Denton, after the regatta, neither club had seriously attempted a search for the *Bright Eyes*.

Polly had told Wyn how men from Meade's Forge had searched for the boat when she was first lost; and some of the bateau men had kept up the search for a long time. Had the motor boat and the silver images been found, Dr. Shelton might have been obliged to pay a large reward to obtain them, for not all of the bateau men of the lake were honest.

"Some of them bothered father a good deal while he was first laid up from his accident, coming by night and trying to get him to give them details which he hadn't given to the other searchers. They thought he must know just where the *Bright*

Eyes was sunk," Polly had told the captain of the Go-Ahead Club. "But they got tired of that after a while. They saw he really did not know what had become of the boat."

Polly! She was the one to confide in, Wyn decided. And the captain of the Go-Ahead Club did not decide upon this until after the other girls in the big tent, and Mrs. Havel, were all asleep. Wyn had been awake an hour wondering what she would better do.

Now, convinced that the boatman's daughter would be a wiser as well as safer confidante at this stage than Frank or the others, Wyn wriggled out of her blanket and seized her bathing suit. It was a beautiful warm night. She was no more afraid of the woods and lake at this hour than she was by daylight.

So she slipped into the suit, got out of the tent without rousing any of the others, selected her own paddle from the heap by the fireplace, and ran barefooted down to the shore. It took but a minute to push her canoe into the water.

She paddled away around the rushes at the end of the strip of sand below the knoll, driving the canoe toward the Jarley Landing. Out of the rushes came a sudden splashing, and some waterfowl, disturbed by her passing, spattered deeper into hiding.

Wyn only laughed. The warm, misty night wrapped her around like a cloak; yet there was sufficient light on the surface of the lake for her to see her course a few yards ahead.

This was a real adventure—out in her canoe alone in the dark. And how fast she made the light craft travel through the still water!

She reached the landing in a very short time. Hopping out, she hauled up the canoe. Was that the water splashing—or was there a sound behind her on the float? Was it a footstep—somebody hastening away?

Now, for the first time, Wyn felt a little tremor. But she was naturally too brave to be particularly disturbed by such a fancy. Who would be lurking about the Jarleys' place at this hour?

So, after a moment, she shook off her doubt, and ran lightly up the float and along the path to the little cottage. She knew Polly's window well enough, and dark as it was, she soon found the spot.

It was shuttered, and the shutter was bolted on the inside; but Wyn scratched upon the blind and after doing so a second time she heard a movement within.

"Polly!" she breathed.

She did not want to awaken Mr. Jarley. She just felt that she could not explain to *him*. Of

course, what she had hit under the water might have nothing to do with the sunken boat, and Wyn shrank from disturbing the boatman himself about it.

"Polly!" she exclaimed, again in a whisper, "it's I—Wyn—Wyn Mallory."

At once she heard her friend's voice in return. The shutter opened. Polly blinked at Wyn through the darkness.

"My *dear!* What do you want? What has happened?" asked the girl of the woods.

"Come on out—do, Polly. I've got something to tell you. Just put on your bathing suit," Wyn whispered.

"For pity's sake! What is it?"

"Don't awaken your father. Come."

"Just a minute," whispered the sleepy Polly, and in not much longer than the time stated she crept through the window.

"I'd wake father if I went out by the door," she said. "Now come down to the landing. What are you doing 'way over here at this time o' night?"

"I have the most surprising thing to tell you."

"What about?"

"I wish you'd go over to Gannet Island with me and see if I'm right. The moon will be up bye and bye; won't it?"

"Yes. But what do you mean? What is the mystery?" inquired Polly. Then she seized Wyn's arm and demanded that she "Hush!" although Wyn's lips were not open at the moment.

"I declare I thought I heard something just then," whispered Polly.

"You're bound to hear things in the dark," returned Wyn, cheerfully.

"But it was somebody coughing."

"A bird?" ventured Wyn. "I heard one splashing in the sedges as I came along in the canoe."

"A bird clearing its throat?" laughed Polly. "Not likely!"

She did not bother about it again, but squeezed Wyn's arm. "Tell me what the matter is. It must be something very important to bring you 'way over here alone at night."

"That's right. It is," replied Wyn, and she related to Polly the thing that was troubling her.

"And, oh, Polly! if that thing I hit under the water should be that boat——"

"Oh, Wyn! What would father say?"

"He'd be delighted. So would we all. And we must find out for sure."

"I'll tell him in the morning. We'll go there and see——"

But Wyn stopped her. She showed her how

necessary it was for the matter to be looked into secretly. Mr. Lavine had promised to give a motor boat to whichever club found the sunken *Bright Eyes* and the silver images. And the Busters must not know a thing about it until they were sure——

"Then Mr. Lavine believes father's story about the boat?" burst in Polly.

"I believe he does, Polly, dear. I think, Polly, that he would be very, very glad to have Mr. Jarley cleared of all suspicion. He is sorry for your father's trouble. I think his attitude toward your father has changed from what it must have been at one time."

"It ought to be!" exclaimed Polly.

"Of course. But we none of us always do all we ought to do," observed Wyn, mildly.

'If we are going to try and find that place where you dived to-day, Wyn, we'd better be about it," Polly urged.

"You'll go now?" cried Wyn.

"Of course I will. The boys will be asleep up in their camp. We will take the *Coquette*. There is a breeze."

"Let's tow my canoe behind, then," said Wyn, eagerly. "Come on! I'm just crazy to dive for the thing again. If it *is* the *Bright Eyes*——"

Polly insisted upon hunting out a couple of old

blankets to wrap about them if the wind should turn chill.

"And after you have been overboard you'll want something to protect you from the night air," she said.

"Oh, Polly! do you suppose I can find the place again?" cried Wyn, infinitely more eager than the boatman's daughter.

"You say it's right off the boys' float? Well! we can look, I guess."

"Feel, you mean," laughed Wyn. "For *I* couldn't see anything down there even by daylight —it was so deep."

"All right. We'll look with our hands. I shall know if it's a boat, Wyn, once I reach it."

"And I hope it *is,*" gasped Wyn. "Not alone for *your* sake, Polly. Why, if it is the *Bright Eyes,* the Go-Aheads will own a motor boat their very own selves. Won't that be fine?"

But Polly was too busy getting the catboat ready to answer. The *Coquette* was moored just a little way off the landing, and the two girls went out to her in Wyn's canoe.

There was a lantern in her cuddy and Polly lit it. Then they slipped the buoyed moorings and spread a little canvas. There was quite a breeze, and it was fair for their course to Gannet Island. Soon the catboat was laying over a bit, and the

foam was streaking away behind them in a broad wake.

"What a lovely night!" sighed Wyn. "And it will be the very gladdest night I ever saw if that thing I hit proves to be the *Bright Eyes.*"

Polly had glanced behind them frequently. "Don't you hear anything?" she asked finally.

"Hear what?"

"Hush! that's somebody getting up a sail. Can't you hear it?"

Wyn listened, and then murmured: "Your ears must be sharper than mine, Polly. I hear nothing but the slap of the water."

"No. There is another sailboat under weigh. Where can it be from?"

"You don't suppose your father was aroused, and is coming after us?" asked Wyn.

"Of course not. Beside, the *Coquette* is the only sailing boat—except a canoe—that we have at present. The other cat is loaned for a week. And I heard the hoops creaking on the mast as a heavy sail went up."

"Some crowd of fishermen?" suggested Wyn.

"But where's their light?"

Wyn stared all around. "You're right," she gasped. "There isn't a single twinkling lantern —except ashore."

Polly, sitting in the stern seat, reached for their

own lantern and smothered its rays. "We won't show a gleam, either," she muttered.

"Why! who could it possibly be?" cried Wyn. "Do you think somebody may be following us?"

"I don't know," returned Polly, grimly. "But I thought I heard something back there at our house. We were talking loud. If those silver images were worth all Dr. Shelton says they were, there are more than us girls who would like to find them."

"My goodness me! I didn't think of *that*," observed Wyn Mallory, with a little shiver. "Do you suppose we really are being followed?"

CHAPTER XXV

THE STRANGE BATEAU

POLLY laughed a little. Yet she spoke seriously.

"You needn't be so worried, Wyn. I know most of the men who do business on the lake. Some of them are mighty fine fellows, and others are just the opposite; but I'm not afraid of the worst of them."

"If they followed us, and we *did* find the sunken motor boat, couldn't they grapple for the box of silver images, and steal them?" demanded Wyn.

"Not easily. You see, they don't know where the box was stowed. Father told nobody but me. The *Bright Eyes* was a good-sized boat, and they'd have some trouble getting up the box without raising the boat herself."

"I suppose that's so," admitted Wyn, less anxiously, as the *Coquette* carried them swiftly toward Gannet Island. "But these men you speak of might interfere with us."

"Yes. That's so. But they'd get as good as

they sent, I reckon," said Polly, who didn't seem to have a bit of fear.

Wyn was no coward; she had shown that the time she and Bessie Lavine were spilled out of their canoes in the middle of the lake. But she had not lived, like Polly, in the woods with few but rough people for associates.

Soon they passed Green Knoll Camp, lying peacefully in the light of the moon that was just then rising above the Forge. Its rays silvered all the knoll and made the camp a charming spot.

"I hope none of them will wake up and find me gone," remarked Wyn, chuckling.

Polly gave the tiller and sheet to her friend and stood up to get a better view of the lake astern of them. At first she saw nothing but the dim shores and the silvering water. Then, some distance out, Polly caught sight of a ghostly sail drifting across the path of moonlight.

"A bateau!" she exclaimed. "And—with the wind the way it is—she must have come right out of our cove, Wynnie."

"Do—do you really think anybody was listening to us when we were talking there on the landing, Polly?" Wyn asked. "And are they aboard *that* bateau?"

"I don't know. But I know I heard something then."

"But that boat isn't following us."

"It may be. We can't tell. They can watch us just as easily as we can watch them."

But when the *Coquette* got around to the side of Gannet Island where the boys' camp was established, the shadow of the high, wooded ridge was thrown out so far across the lake that the swimming raft and its neighborhood were in darkness.

The catboat, with her sail dropped and her nose just touching the edge of the float, was quite hidden by this shadow of the island, which was all the darker in contrast with the brilliant moonlight lying on the water farther out.

"I'll carry the kedge to the float," whispered Polly, "and then we'll pay out the line till the *Coquette* floats about over the spot where you think the thing you hit lies."

"Let's get my canoe out of the way, too," urged Wyn. "Oh! I hope the boys will not wake up."

"What's that light up there?" exclaimed Polly, suddenly.

"That's the spark of their campfire. It's in the rocks, so no harm can come from it; they don't trouble to cover it when they go to bed."

"Now, Wyn—push the boat off."

They worked the catboat from the float for several yards. "Wait," whispered Wyn. "Let's try here."

"Are you going to dive?"

"Yes. It will make some splash; but I don't believe I can reach the bottom of the lake otherwise, it is so deep here."

"Careful!" cautioned Polly. "You may hurt yourself on whatever is down there."

"I'll look out," returned Wyn, again filling her ears with cotton. She slipped off the skirt of her bathing suit, too, so as to have more freedom. Then she poised herself for a moment on the decked-over part of the sailboat—a slim, lithe figure in the semi-darkness—and gradually bent over with her arms outstretched to part the water.

As she dived forward she thought she heard a quick exclamation from Polly; but Wyn believed it to be an encouraging cry. At least, she gave it no attention as she clove the water and went down, down, down into the depths of the lake.

She opened her eyes, but, of course, saw nothing but a great, shadowy mass below her. Toward this mass she swam eagerly; the lake seemed much deeper than it had by daylight.

Struggling against the uplift of the water, she beat her way down into the depths for more than a minute. That was a goodly length of time for the first submersion. And she did not reach the bottom, nor find any object like the thing she had struck against some hours before.

It was necessary for her to rise. As she turned over, a luminous spot appeared over her head, and toward this spot she sprang. With aching chest she reached the surface, and sprang breast high out of the water—some yards from the catboat. There was a strong current here.

"Polly!" she gasped.

"Sh!" hissed her comrade's voice, in warning.

Surprised, Wyn obeyed the warning. Causing scarcely a ripple in the water, she paddled to the boat. There she clung to the rail and listened. She could not see Polly.

"Dunno where they went to in that cat, Eb," growled a hoarse voice out of the darkness.

Wyn darted a glance over her shoulder. There, looming gray and ghostly, was the tall sail they had seen once before. The strange, square-nosed bateau was drifting by, but at some distance. Evidently the catboat was well hidden in the shadow of the island.

Suddenly Polly reached over the edge of the boat and seized Wyn's shoulders. "Don't try to climb in," she whispered. "They'll see or hear the splash."

"All right," breathed back the captain of the Go-Aheads.

"It's Eb Lornigan and some of his friends. Eb

is a disgrace to the lake. He's been in jail more than once," whispered Polly.

But Wyn's shoulders began to feel cold. The night air, after all, was not really warm. "I'm going down again," she whispered.

"Did—did you find it?" queried Polly.

"No. But I will," declared the other girl, confidently, and slipped into the water.

She ventured under the bottom of the catboat and, turning suddenly, braced her feet against it, and so flung herself down into the depths.

She descended more swiftly with the momentum thus gained, traveling toward the bottom on a different slant than before. With her hands far before her she defended her head from collision with any sunken object there might be down here. And this time she actually did hit something again.

She turned quickly and grabbed at it with both hands. It seemed like a sharp, smooth pole sticking almost upright in the water. There was a bit of rag, or marine plant of some kind, attached to it.

She struggled to pull herself down by the staff, but she had been below now longer than before. Just what the staff could be she did not imagine until she had again turned and "kicked" her way upward.

"It's the pennant staff of the sunken boat!"

she gasped, as she came to the surface and could open her mouth once more.

"Hush! what's the matter with you?" demanded Polly, in a low voice, directly at hand.

"Oh! have they gone?"

"The bateau is out of hearing distance. But you *do* splash like a porpoise."

"Nonsense! Let me climb up."

Polly gave her some help and in a few moments Wyn lay panting in the tiny cockpit of the boat.

"Did—did you find anything?" queried Polly, anxiously.

Wyn told her what she believed she had found underneath the water, and the position of the staff. "It must be lying bow on to us here," she said.

"Oh! do you suppose it really *is* the *Bright Eyes?*"

"It's something," replied Wyn, confidently. pulling one of the blankets around her.

"I'm going down myself," declared Polly, sharply.

"All right. Maybe you can find more of the boat. It's there."

Polly sprang up into the bow of the catboat, poised herself for a moment and then dived overboard. She could outswim and outdive any of the Go-Ahead girls—and why not? She was in, or on, the lake from early spring until late autumn.

Polly was under the surface no longer than Wyn; but when she came up she struck out for the *Coquette* and scrambled immediately into the boat.

"What is it? Am I right? Is it a boat?" cried the anxious Wynnie.

"Yes! It's there. Oh, Wynifred Mallory! My father is going to be so relieved! It's—it's just heavenly! How can we ever thank you?"

Wyn was crying softly. "I'm so delighted, dear Polly. It—it is *sure* the *Bright Eyes?*"

"It is a motor boat. I went right down to the deck, and scrambled around it. There are surely not *two* motor boats sunk in Lake Honotonka," declared Polly.

"Hush, then!" urged Wyn. "We'll keep still about it. It is my find and I'll telegraph to Mr. Lavine as quick as I can. The Go-Ahead girls are going to own a motor boat! Won't that be fine?"

"Say nothing to any of the others. I'll tell father," said Polly, beginning to haul in on the kedge line. "And he'll know what to do about raising the launch. He'll have to go to the Forge——"

"Then he can send the message to Mr. Lavine for me. Tell him the girls have found the sunken boat, and sign my name to it. That will bring Bessie's father up here in a hurry."

The girls got their anchor and the canoe, and

put up the sail again. As the *Coquette* shot away from the boys' swimming float, the ghostly sail of the strange bateau again crossed the path of moonlight at the other end of the island.

"I'd feel better," muttered Polly, "if those fellows were not hanging about so close."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BOYS TO THE RESCUE

WYN got into her canoe in sight of Green Knoll Camp, and leaving Polly to work the *Coquette* home alone, paddled to the shore, drew out the canoe and turned it over on the beach with the six other canoes belonging to the camp, and so stole up the hill and prepared for bed again.

Nobody seemed to have missed her, although it was now two hours after midnight. The captain of the girls' club felt a glow of satisfaction at her heart as she composed herself for sleep. She believed she was going to have a great and happy surprise for the girls of the Go-Ahead Club; and in addition the Jarleys would be relieved of the cloud of suspicion that had hung over Mr. Jarley ever since Dr. Shelton's motor boat was lost.

Wyn slept so late that all the other girls were up and had run down for their morning dip ere Mrs. Havel shook her.

"You must have had your bath very early, Wynnie," said that lady. "Here is your bathing suit all wet."

"Yes, ma'am," responded Wyn, sleepily.

"Now, rouse up. The whole camp is astir," said Mrs. Havel, and Wyn was fully dressed when the other girls came back. There were not too many questions asked, so her secret remained safe.

She became considerably disturbed, however, when the hours of the forenoon passed and she neither heard from nor saw anything of the Jarleys.

Once a big bateau went drifting by and disappeared behind Gannet Island, under a lazy sail and with two men at the long sweeps, or oars. When it was lost to view Wyn was troubled by the thought that it might be the same mysterious craft that had followed the catboat the night before. Had it anchored off the boys' camp now?

So, to calm her own mind, she suggested that they all paddle over to Cave-in-the-Wood Camp and take their luncheon with them.

"Goodness me, Wynifred!" exclaimed Bess, the boy-despiser, "can't you keep away from those boys for a single day?"

"I notice we usually have a good time when the boys are around," returned Wyn, cheerfully.

"Oh, they're quite a 'necessary evil,'" drawled Frank. "But I feel myself like Johnny Bloom's aunt when we get rid of the Busters for a time."

"What about Johnny's aunt?" queried Mina.

"Why, do you know that Johnny belongs to the Scouts and one law of the Scouts is that they shall each do something for somebody each day to make the said somebody happy."

"Rather involved in your English, Miss, but we understand you," said Grace.

"So far," agreed Percy Havel. "But where do Johnny Bloom and his aunt come in?"

"Why, any day he can't think of any other kindness to render his friends," chuckled Frankie, "he goes to see his aunt. She is so glad when he goes home again—she detests boys—that Johnny feels all the thrill of having performed a good deed."

"Now, Frank!" laughed Wyn, "you know it isn't as bad as all *that.*"

"Yes, it is," chuckled Frankie. "You don't know Johnny Bloom as well as his neighbors do. He lives on my street."

"Humph! most boys are just as bad," declared Bess. "Just the same, if Wyn says 'Gannet Island' I reckon we'll all have to go."

"And we'll have some fun diving," Grace Hedges declared. "I wish we had a diving float over here."

Mrs. Havel preferred to remain at the camp and the six girls were a very hilarious party as

they set forth in their canoes and fresh bathing suits for the island.

By this time every member of the Go-Ahead Club was as brown as a berry, inured to exposure in the sun, and enjoying the outdoor life of woods and lake to the full.

Mina's timidity had worn off, Percy was not so "finicky" in her tastes, Bessie was more careful of other people's feelings, Grace really seemed almost cured of laziness, Frank was by no means so hoydenish as she once was, and as for Wynifred, she was just as hearty and happy as it seemed a girl could be. Their independent, busy life on Green Knoll was doing them all a world of good.

As the little squadron of canoes drew near to the easterly end of the Island the girls were suddenly excited by a great disturbance in the bushes on the hill above them. This end of the island was exceedingly steep and rocky.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Mina, as some object flashed into view for a moment and then disappeared.

"It's one of the goats," squealed Frankie.

Gannet Island was grazed by a good-sized herd of goats, but they remained mostly at this end and kept away from the boys' camp at the other. The girls had seldom seen any of the herd, although they had heard the kids bleating now

and then, and the boys had described the old rams and how ugly they were.

Here, right above them, was going on a striking domestic wrangle, for in a moment they saw that two of the rams were having a set-to among the bushes on the side-hill, while several mild-eyed Nannies and their progeny looked on.

The rams would back away a little in the brush and then charge each other. When their hard horns collided, they rang like steel, and several times the antagonists were both overborne by the shock and rolled upon the ground.

"What a place for a fight!" exclaimed Frank. "What do you know about *that*, girls?"

"It's a shame," quavered Mina. "Somebody ought to separate them."

"Sure! I vote that you go right up and do so, Miss Everett," said Grace, briskly.

However, Frank's criticism of the judgment of the combating goats was correct. It was no place for a fair fight. One of the animals happened to get "up hill" and at the next charge the lower goat was lifted completely off its feet and came tumbling down the steep descent with the speed of an avalanche.

The girls screamed, the other goats bleated—while the conquering Billie took a commanding position on a rock and gazed down upon his falling

enemy. The latter could not stop. Twice he tried to scramble to his sharp little hoofs, but could not accomplish the feat. So, then, quite helpless, he fell the entire distance and came finally, with a mighty splash, into the deep water under the bank.

"Oh! the poor creature will be drowned!" cried Wyn, in great distress at this catastrophe, although some of the other girls were inclined to laugh, for the goat *did* look more than a little comical.

He had been battered a good deal and had received a wound upon one side of his face that did not improve his looks at all. And while he had been so lively and pugnacious up on the hillside, now he splashed about in the lake quite helplessly.

The shore of the island just here was altogether too abrupt to afford the unlucky goat any foothold. And the goat is not naturally an aquatic animal.

"Come on!" urged Bessie. "Let's leave him. We can't do any good here."

"Of course we can help him," cried Wyn. "Grab him by the other horn, Frank!"

She had driven her own canoe to the far side of the goat and now seized the beast's horn. He could not fight in the water and Wyn and Frank slowly guided him along the shore until they reached a sloping piece of beach where he could,

at least, get a footing. But he lay down, half in and half out of the water, seemingly exhausted.

"He can never climb that bank," declared Mina.

"We'll boost him up, then," said Frank, with confidence. "Having set out to be twin Good Samaritans, we'll finish the job properly; eh, Wyn?"

Her friend agreed, laughing, and both girls sprang ashore. They didn't mind getting a little wet, considering how they were dressed.

The goat bleated forlornly as they seized upon him; he was quite all the two girls could lift, and they actually had to drag him up the steeper part of the hill by his legs.

Their friends below chaffed them a good deal, for it was a ridiculous sight. Soon, however, Wyn and Frank got their awkward burden to the mouth of an easily sloping gully, that led toward the interior of the island. As soon as he could, the animal scrambled upon his feet.

Once firmly set, however, this ungrateful goat's temper changed most surprisingly. Or he may have felt that his dignity had been ruffled by the treatment he had received at the hands of his rescuers.

So he began stamping his little sharp hoofs and lowered his head, shaking the latter threateningly.

"What did I tell you?" called Bess, from below. "Next you two sillies know he'll butt you."

"Oh, come along, Wyn!" gasped Frankie. "Plague the goat, anyway!" as she dodged the enraged animal's first charge.

The goat was headed up the gully, away from the shore, or he might have gone head first into the lake again. As the girls escaped him, Wyn, laughing immoderately, looked back. A big beech tree cropped out of the bank not far away, and under this tree she descried a figure lying.

"Oh, Frank!" she cried.

Her friend turned and saw the figure, too.

"Oh, Wyn!"

Their ejaculations seemed to have attracted Mr. William Goat's attention to the same reclining figure. Outstretched upon the sward, with a large handkerchief over his face as a protection from gnats and other insects, and with his fat fingers interlaced across what Dave Shepard wickedly termed his chum's "bow-window," lay the quite unconscious Tubby Blaisdell.

"Tubby!" shrieked the girls in chorus.

The fat boy sat up as though a spring had been released. The handkerchief was still over his face, and he grunted blindly.

It was a challenge to Mr. Goat. He charged.

Amid the screams of the girls the goat hurtled through the air, all four feet gathered beneath him, and landed head-and-horns in the middle of poor Tubby's waistcoat!

It wasn't a very big goat. 'Twas lucky for Master Blaisdell that this was so. Tubby went back with an awful grunt, heels in the air, and the goat turned a complete somersault. But the latter scrambled to his feet a whole lot quicker than did Tubby.

"Run—run, Tubby!" shrieked Frank.

"Look out for him, Ralph!" cried Wyn.

Back the goat came. This time he took Master Blaisdell from the rear and butted him so hard that he actually seemed to lift the fat boy to his feet.

The youth had scratched the handkerchief from his face, and now could see the enemy. Tubby had emitted nothing but a series of excruciating grunts; but now, when he saw the goat making ready for another charge, he met the animal with a yell, leaping into the air with his legs a-straddle, so that the Billie ran between them, and then Tubby footed it up the gully as fast as he could travel.

The goat, headed down hill again, saw his old enemies, the two girls, and made as though to attack them. Wyn and Frank, almost dead with

laughter, managed to roll down the bank and so get out of the erratic goat's sight. The other girls had only heard the noise of the conflict, and did not understand; nor could Wyn and Frankie explain when they first scrambled into their canoes.

"Poor Tubby! Poor Tubby!" was all Wyn could say. "Let's paddle around to the boys' camp. He's run for home."

"It was a home run, all right!" gasped Frank.

But three minutes later, when the canoes got into the cove where Polly's father had met with his accident in the *Bright Eyes,* Wyn suddenly found something more serious than Tubby Blaisdell's experience to worry about. There was the big bateau, its sail furled, almost over the spot where Wyn and Polly were sure the lost motor boat lay!

"Oh, dear me!" cried Bess. "Now we can't have any fun on the raft. Those men will be in our way. What do you suppose they are poking around there in the water with those poles for?"

Wyn began to paddle fast. She shot ahead of the other girls and aimed directly for the bit of beach on which the boys' canoes were drawn.

The noise and laughter up at the camp assured her that Tubby had arrived and that all the Busters were at home. Wyn had made up her mind quickly that, if she must, she would rather take

the boys into her confidence about the sunken boat than let those bateau men find it.

"Boys! Dave!" she hailed them from the water.

Young Shepard appeared at once and, seeing Wyn, ran down to the shore.

"Will you help us?" gasped Wyn. "Quick! get the boys! Move your diving float where I tell you; those men will find it first, if you don't."

"Find what?" demanded Dave. "Are you sensible, Wynnie?"

The explanation tumbled out of Wyn Mallory's lips then in rather a jumbled fashion; but Dave understood. He turned and gave the view-halloa for his mates. They all tumbled down the bank save Tubby.

"Get a move on, fellows," commanded the leader of the Busters. "We've got to move that raft. Wyn will tell us where. And later we'll tell you *why*. But the word is now: Look sharp!"

CHAPTER XXVII

IS IT THE "BRIGHT EYES"?

WITH a whirl and clash of paddles the little flotilla of canoes shot out to the diving float. The bateau was only a few yards away. The two rough-looking men in her were sounding the lake bottom with long poles; but as yet they had not got around to the right spot.

Wyn breathlessly told the boys to move the raft to the place to which she paddled. The other girls were excitedly asking questions; but neither Wyn nor Dave answered.

The captain of the Go-Aheads thought that if the raft could be held stationary—anchored in some way—directly over the sunken boat, the prize would be safe until Mr. Jarley, or somebody else in authority, came to claim the *Bright Eyes*. Of course, providing this sunken boat was she.

Polly had seemed so positive, and so eager to get her father started after the motor boat he had lost, that Wyn could not understand why the Jarleys were not already on the spot.

"Hey, there! what are you boys doing?" demanded one of the bateau men, hailing Dave and his friends on the raft.

"Moving our float," replied the captain of the Busters, promptly.

"Well, don't you git in our way," said the man, crossly.

"Hel-*lo!*" exclaimed the saucy Ferd Roberts. "I've always wondered who owned Lake Honotonka, and now I know."

"You'll know a whole lot more if you don't look out, Young Fresh," growled the other boatman.

"I shouldn't wonder," laughed Ferd. "But I'm not going to school to *you,* Mister."

"Do be quiet, Ferd," advised Dave. "Now, Wynnie! What do you say to this?"

Meantime the boys had raised the two big stones that served the raft as anchors, and had poled the float near to Wyn's canoe.

"Oh! a little farther, Dave, please," cried the anxious girl.

"Say! I wanter know what you young ones are up to?" repeated the first boatman.

"Can't you see?" returned Dave. "We're shifting our raft."

"What for?"

"Cat's fur! To make kittens' breeches of,

'cause we couldn't get dog fur—*now* do you know?" snapped Ferd.

"Shut up, Ferd!" commanded Dave, again.

"He'd better shut up," growled the man, "or something'll happen to him—the young shrimp!"

"Oh, dear me, Wyn!" cried Bessie Lavine; "let's go back to camp."

"You'd all better scatter—both gels and boys," said the boatman, threateningly. "We're busy here an' we don't want to be bothered by shrimps."

"I guess we'll stay a while longer, Mister," Dave said, boldly.

"We were here first," cried the irrepressible Ferd.

"You youngsters air in our way. Get out," commanded the boatman.

He was working the bateau nearer to the raft, using one of the long sweeps for that purpose.

"Heave over the anchors again, fellows," said Dave, quietly. "Then stand by with your paddles to repel boarders. We mustn't let 'em have the raft, or move it."

"Oh, Wyn!" begged Mina Everett, "let's go away."

The girls had all paddled near Wyn Mallory. Now they clustered about her in plain anxiety. The boys had climbed upon the raft and all five

were plainly intending to offer resistance to the ugly boatmen.

"Now, girls," begged the captain of the Go-Aheads, firmly, "let us show *some* courage, at least. The boys are willing to fight our battle——"

"*Our* battle?" gasped Bessie. "What do you mean?"

In a whisper Wyn explained to the wondering and frightened girls what it was all about.

"Polly and I believe the lost motor boat lies right beneath us here. We must keep those men off, for they are hunting for the sunken boat, too," concluded Wynnie.

"My goodness! how exciting!" cried Grace Hedges.

"And we'll actually win the prize your father offered us, Bess!" gasped Percy Havel.

"I don't see that *we* have had much to do with it," said Frank. "Wyn made the discovery."

"What is for one is for all," declared Wynnie. "But we won't win Mr. Lavine's prize unless the boat is raised and the silver images are delivered to Dr. Shelton. If those men get hold of the boat——"

Suddenly one of the boatmen—a long-legged fellow with a cast in one eye and lantern jaws sparsely covered with sandy whisker—came for-

ward to the bow of the bateau and poised himself for a leap to the diving float.

"Keep off!" Dave warned him, swinging his paddle over his head. "You jump over here and you'll catch this where Kellup caught the hen—right in the neck! You let us alone and we'll let you alone."

The boatman told him, in no very choice language, what he would do to Dave when he caught him; but the captain of the Busters did not appear to be much shaken.

"Hold on, Eb!" yelled the other boatman. "I'll run that raft down and spill 'em all off."

"You try it and you'll likely smash your boat," shouted Dave. "I warn you."

Mina Everett began to cry softly, for the suggestion of a pitched battle between the boys and the boatmen frightened her dreadfully. Bess began to grow excited.

"Aren't those men just *mean?* I wish I had something to hit them with—I do! I believe I'll get out on the raft with *my* paddle."

"That wouldn't be a bad idea," said Grace. "I think the boys are as nice to us as they can be."

Suddenly, while the attention of all the others was held by the exciting situation on the raft, Frank Cameron cried out:

"Who's this coming? Oh, girls! isn't that Polly? Look, Wyn!"

Wyn almost overturned her canoe in her eagerness to back out of the group and whirl her canoe about that she might see. Down upon the scene was bearing one of the larger power boats from the other end of the lake.

"It's Dr. Shelton's *Sunshine Boy!*" cried Percy Havel.

"And that *is* Polly Jolly in the bow," exclaimed Wyn. "Hurrah!"

She drove her paddle into the water and sent her canoe driving for the approaching motor boat.

"Polly! Polly!" she called, long before the boatman's daughter could hear her.

But Polly recognized her just the same, and waved her hand; there was a gentleman pacing the deck, too, who came to lean on the rail and look at the flying canoe. Wyn next saw Mr. Jarley, in his working clothes, put his head out of the cabin that housed the motor.

"It's Dr. Shelton," Wyn thought. "Then he and Mr. Jarley have made it up. I'm so glad!"

But the motor boat was coming fast and Wyn drove her canoe as though she were racing. Swerving the craft quickly, the girl brought it very nicely into a berth beside the motor boat. Polly leaned down and steadied the canoe with the boat hook,

and her friend hopped aboard. Then together they hoisted over the rail the almost swamped canoe.

"What's all this? What's all this?" demanded Dr. Shelton. "You girls are regular acrobats. Hullo! This is the young miss who won the canoe race and the swimming match for girls, the other day. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir," said Polly, presenting Wyn proudly. "This is Miss Wynifred Mallory, my very dear friend."

"The girl who thinks she has found our old motor boat—eh?" asked the burly doctor.

"I am sure she has found it, sir," declared Polly. "And what are Eb and his chum, Billy Smith, trying to do there at the raft, Wyn?"

"They suspect something; but the boys have got the float right over the sunken boat and have promised to hold the bateau men off——"

Just then Dr. Shelton turned quickly, picked up a megaphone and bawled through it to the bateau men, one of whom had leaped aboard the boys' raft.

"Hey, you! Get off that raft and keep off it, or I'll put you both in jail at the Forge. Understand me?"

It was evident that the boatmen *did* understand the doctor, for the trespasser aboard the raft

leaped back into the bateau without a blow being struck, although the boys were ready for him. The big sail of the craft was immediately raised and she had borne off to some distance when the *Sunshine Boy* was allowed to drift in close to the float.

"Now, boys," said Dr. Shelton, genially, "I understand you have found my old *Bright Eyes* under water here and have been guarding it from all comers. Is that right?"

"No, Doctor," returned Dave. "We fellows have had mighty little to do with it. It's the girls——"

"It's Wyn!" cried Frank, "and nobody else."

"Wyn did it all," agreed Bess.

"But those men, poking around here, might have found it and laid claim to it, sir, if the boys had not come to the rescue," declared the captain of the Go-Aheads, warmly.

"You seem to be a Mutual Admiration Society," laughed the doctor. "However, if the boat is here and that express box intact, as Jarley says, I certainly owe somebody something handsome for finding it."

"Oh, no, sir!" murmured Wyn, quickly, standing by his side. "You owe me nothing. Mr. Lavine has promised our club a present, and Polly and her father are going to be made very happy if

it turns out all right. *That* is reward enough for us."

"Humph! you feel that way about it; do you, Miss Mallory?" queried the doctor. "Just the same, if the *Bright Eyes* really is sunk here I must show my gratitude to somebody."

"Then do something for Polly," Wyn whispered. "Give her a chance to go to school—to Denton Academy with the rest of us girls. That would be fine! She wouldn't let Mr. Lavine do that for her; but I know she'll accept it from you, when her father has proved himself clear of suspicion."

"Ha! John Jarley is a better man than I am," grunted Dr. Shelton. "I had no business to talk to him the way I did regatta day. I'm free to admit I was wrong, whether we recover the *Bright Eyes* and the silver images, or not!"

And the question, Is it the *Bright Eyes?* was the principal subject of discussion among them all. The boys were just as eager as were the girls over the affair.

"If the sunken boat is all right—and the images," said Dave Shepard, "you girls will be lucky enough to sail a motor boat of your own."

"And we'd never own it if you boys hadn't come forward as you did," declared Wyn. "Isn't that so, Bess?"

Bess had to admit the fact, much as she disliked praising boys.

"Oh, we'll let you boys sail in our new boat once in a while," she said.

"Goodness me! I should say yes!" exclaimed Frank, suddenly. "For we've got to have somebody teach us how to run a motor boat; haven't we?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

A FRIEND IN NEED

It was early on the next day that Bessie received a message from her father for the whole club:

"Look for me in a few hours. Shall run up to see what Wyn has done as soon as I can get away. If it is all right, you shall have new boat this season.—Henry Lavine."

A man brought it over from the Forge. The girls were delighted with the news. A guard had been set over the spot where the sunken boat lay and Dr. Shelton and Mr. Jarley were making arrangements to have a derrick barge towed up to Gannet Island, so that the old *Bright Eyes* could be brought to the surface quickly.

Naturally the Busters were too much interested in these proceedings to come over to Green Knoll Camp; and the girls had had so much excitement and exercise of late that they were inclined to take matters quietly for the time being.

Therefore, there was not a canoe on the lake

when a fussy, smoky little motor boat, late in the afternoon, came into the lake from the Wintinooski and puffed out into deep water, evidently bound for either the Island or Green Knoll Camp.

The deep cove, at the head of which the little red and yellow cottage of the Jarleys was set, was like a big bay in the contour of the lake shore. It was out here in this deep water that Wyn Mallory and Bess Lavine had been swamped by the squall. From the docks at the Forge to the point east of Green Knoll, where the girls' camp was situated, was all of eight miles. When this little motor boat had sputtered along until she was about half way between those two points, she suddenly stopped.

The girls had been lazily on the lookout for Mr. Lavine's appearance and earlier in the day had kept the camp spyglass busy. Now Frank suddenly caught it up again and focused it almost at once on the stalled motor boat.

"Oh! what's that?" was her excited demand. "Girls! there's a boat we missed before."

"Where?" drawled Grace, lazily.

"It isn't father; is it?" demanded Bess.

"How do I know? It's a power boat—— Goodness, what's that?"

She jumped so that Wyn came to her side quickly. "Let me see, Frank," she begged.

"There's—there's a fire!" gasped Frankie.

The girls came running at her cry. Even Mrs. Havel left her seat and stepped out of the shade of the beech tree to scan the water under her hand.

"I see smoke!" cried Percy.

"Dear me! is the boat really afire?" demanded Mina Everett.

"Of course, it can't be father," declared Bess. "He knows how to take care of a motor boat."

Through the glass Wyn, who now had it, saw the flames leaping from under the hood of the boat, while a dense plume of smoke began to reel away on the breeze that was blowing.

"It is afire!" she gasped. "Oh! it *is!* What can we do?"

"We could never reach it in our canoes before the boat burns to the water's edge," cried Frankie.

They could see two figures on the doomed boat. Through the glass Wyn could see them so plainly that she knew one to be a waterman, while the other was much better dressed. Indeed, she feared that she recognized the figure of this second man.

"Let me have the glass, Wyn," said Bessie, eagerly.

But Wyn, for once, was disobliging. "You can't see anything—much," she said. "Come on, Bess! let's try and paddle out to them."

"And have them swamp our canoes if they

tried to climb in," said Miss Lavine. "No, thanks!"

"Come on!" cried Frank, joining in. "We ought to try and help."

"What's the use?" drawled Bessie, walking away. "And you're mean not to let me have the glass, Wyn."

"Oh, come on and take it!" gasped Wyn.

"Don't want it now," snapped Bess, who took offense rather easily at times. "You can keep the old thing."

Wyn sighed with relief. Then she whirled quickly and ran down to the beach, with Frank right at her heels. They were the only two girls who launched their canoes. Wyn had brought the glass with her.

"Now I *know* Bess won't see him," she exclaimed, almost in a whisper.

"What's that?" demanded Frankie, who overheard. "What do you mean, Wyn?"

"I believe that is Mr. Lavine out there," said the captain of the Go-Aheads. "Oh, Frank! paddle hard!"

And it *was* Mr. Lavine. He had hired this little gasoline boat, with its owner to run it, at Denton, and had paid the owner an extra five-dollar bill to force the boat to its very highest speed (and that wasn't much) all the way up the

Wintinooski. Mr. Lavine was in a hurry; he was in too much of a hurry, as it proved.

Somewhere off Meade's Forge he began to smell the gasoline all too strongly. There was a leak somewhere; but the boat kept on.

Finally even the reckless driver grew frightened and shut off the spark.

"There's a leak, boss," he drawled. "Sure as aigs is aigs!"

Mr. Lavine tore up one of the boards under his feet in the cockpit. A man with half an eye could have seen the scum of gasoline on the bilge in the cockpit.

"Leak!" he exclaimed, wrathfully. "I should say you had been using the boat's bottom for a gasoline tank. Why! we might have been blown up a dozen times."

"I expect the leak's in the feed pipe," confessed the boatman. "But I thought I'd got her fixed las' week."

"You've got *us* fixed," snapped Mr. Lavine. "'Way out here in the middle of Lake Honotonka, too—and I in a hurry."

"Wal," said the man, "I'll putty up the leak and you see if you kin swab out the boat. I wouldn't dare try and ignite her again with so much gasoline around."

"I—should—say—not!" gasped the gentle-

man, and removed his coat, rolled up his sleeves and his trousers, and set to work.

They both labored like beavers for half an hour and then the boatman did the very silliest thing one can imagine. He had worked hard and, being a man addicted to tobacco, he felt the need of a smoke.

He pulled out his pipe, filled it, unnoticed by Mr. Lavine, who was still trying to swab out the last of the bilge and gasoline, and scratched a match. He was directly in front of the hood of the boat when he did it. The next moment there was a flash, a roar, and the man was flung the length of the boat, against Mr. Lavine in the stern, and the two almost went overboard.

The foolish smoker lost his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes, and a lot of his front hair. He was scorched quite severely, too; but the peril which menaced them with the front of the boat in flames drove the thought of his burns from the fellow's mind.

"And I can't swim a stroke, boss!" he cried.

"You have nothing on me there," declared Mr. Lavine. "I have never been able to master more than the first few motions in the art of swimming."

But the flames were springing higher and they had nothing with which to throw water on the fire. The man had not even a bailing tin in his moribund

old craft. Mr. Lavine had been using a swab and was covered with grease and dirty water.

This became a small thing, however—and that within a very few minutes. The boat was doomed and both knew it.

Mr. Lavine tried to tear up more of the grating under foot so as to make something that would float and upon which they might bear themselves up in the water. But the boards were too thin.

Then he tried to unship the rudder (the singed boatman was no use at all in this emergency) and so make use of that as a float. But the bolts were rusted and the boat had begun to swing around so that the fire blew right into the stern.

They both had to leap overboard.

It was a serious situation indeed. By Mr. Lavine's advice they paddled toward the bow, one on either side of the boat, for the flames were rushing aft.

The bow was a mere shell, however. The flames had already almost consumed it, and soon the fire fairly ate through the bows at the water level. The water rushed in and so sank the boat by the head.

Not that the boat went straight down. The stern rose in the water and the two men, in their desperate strait, gazed at the flames above their heads.

Had it been night the fire would have been like a great torch in the middle of the lake—and it would have brought help from all directions. As it was, the black smoke first thrown off, and then the steam, attracted more than the girls of Green Knoll Camp to the scene.

At the landing Mr. Jarley was splicing some heavy rope which he expected to use the next day when the sunken *Bright Eyes* would be actually raised. Polly saw the smoke first from the cottage and ran out to tell him.

"One of those motor boats is afire, Father!" she cried. Instantly the boatman set about going to the rescue. It was a fair day, but there was a good breeze blowing. Jarley took the *Coquette*.

He had no idea to whom he was playing the friend in need when he sailed the catboat down upon the scene of the disaster. It was a chance to help two fellow beings and the boatman cared not who they were.

Of course the sailing craft beat out the two frantically paddling girls from Green Knoll Camp. Yet it was still a long way from the spot when the last of the burning boat seemed to sink completely and the flames were snuffed out by the waters of the lake.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SUNKEN TREASURE

WYN and Frank were in despair when they saw the last of the flames wink out and the balloon of smoke sail away upon the breeze. They were too far away to be able to see the men struggling in the water—if they were still there.

"Oh! suppose Mr. Jarley doesn't reach them in time?" cried the captain of the girls' club.

"He must! he must!" groaned Frank, beating the water as hard as she could with her paddle.

"You'll have your canoe over!" exclaimed Wyn. "Look out, Frank!"

"I don't care! I don't care!" repeated the good-hearted Frances. "Oh, dear me! Suppose Mr. Lavine should be drowned? What would Bessie do? And they so much to each other!"

The girls saw the catboat round to suddenly, and Mr. Jarley drop the sail. The *Coquette* seemed to drive straight across the spot where the burned motor boat had gone down.

They saw the boatman bend over the rail once —and then again. Each time he lifted in—or

helped lift in—some object; but whether it was the men he picked up, or some of the floating wreckage, the girls could not see.

They drove their canoes on, however, and Mr. Jarley saw them when he brought the catboat about. So he sailed down to pick them up likewise.

"Did you get them? Did you get them?" shouted Wyn, resting on her paddle.

Frankie was crying—and she was not a "weepy" girl as a general thing. But the peril seemed so terrible that she could not control herself for the moment.

Mr. Jarley—whose figure was all the girls could see in the catboat—leaned over and waved his hand to the girls. Was it meant to be reassuring? They did not know until the *Coquette* tacked so as to run down very close to them.

"Is that his girl with you, Miss Mallory?" demanded Polly's father.

"No. She did not come. She doesn't know," cried Wyn. "Oh, Mr. Jarley! is he all right?"

At that Mr. Lavine's head and shoulders appeared above the rail.

"We're alive, girls," he called, hoarsely. "This brave fellow caught us just in time. Where's Bess?"

"She doesn't even know it was you in the burn-

ing boat," cried Wyn. "But Frank and I started out for you."

"You'd been awfully wet before ever we could have reached you, though, Mr. Lavine," choked Frank, quickly turning from tears to laughter, as was her nature.

Mr. Jarley had dropped the sail again, and beckoned the girls to approach.

"Come aboard," he said, gravely, "and I'll tow your canoes behind us. Shall I take this gentleman to your camp, Miss Mallory?"

But Wyn was thinking to good purpose. She saw that Mr. Jarley, like his daughter, wished to have nothing to do with the Lavines. She knew that now Mr. Lavine would be doubly grateful to the boatman, and that the time was ripe for the old friends to come to a better understanding.

"Why, Mr. Jarley," she said, "we haven't a thing at the camp he can put on—or the other man. No, sir. I don't know what we should do with them there."

Jarley's face flushed and he glanced back at the Forge. But it was near sunset already, and the Forge was much farther away than his own landing. The case was obvious.

"Well," he said, "I can take them home. Polly will find something for them to put on while

their clothing is being dried. Yes! that may be best."

"And you take us girls right along with you and we'll paddle home from the landing," declared Wyn.

Wyn wanted to see Polly. After all, she believed, it lay with the boatman's daughter to make friends between the Jarleys and the Lavines. The captain of the Go-Ahead Club felt as though her long and exciting vacation under canvas would come to a very happy conclusion if she could see the two men who had once been such close friends, reunited.

Wyn was the first one ashore when the bow of the catboat touched the landing. Polly came running from the cottage, for she had spied their approach.

"Oh, Wynnie!" she cried, "what was it? Did father get them safely?"

"He saved them both—the most wonderful thing, Polly Jolly!" cried Wyn.

"Not so wonderful," corrected Polly, with pride. "My father has saved the lives of people from the lake before."

"But it *is* wonderful," quoth Wyn, "because one of the men saved is Bessie's father."

"Mr. Lavine!" gasped Polly.

"Yes. Now he owes his life to your father, just as Bess owes hers to you."

"Don't talk so, Wyn," begged Polly. "It's nothing."

"Nothing! It's everything! Don't stand in the way of your father and Bessie's being good friends again."

"Why, Wynnie!" gasped Polly, with a deeper color in her cheek.

"Don't you dare to act 'offish,'" warned Wyn. "The Lavines feel very kindly toward you—you know it. And now I am sure Mr. Lavine will feel more than kindly toward your father. Bring them together, Polly."

"You talk as though *I* could do anything," responded the boatman's girl.

"You can. You can do everything! Show your father that you feel kindly toward Mr. Lavine. That will break down *his* coldness quicker than anything," declared the inspired young peacemaker.

Wet and bedraggled, Mr. Lavine and his companion stepped ashore.

"Hi, Polly!" shouted her father. "Take Mr. Lavine up to the house and see if he can wear some of my things while his clothes are drying. I can find something at the shed here, for Bill."

Polly hesitated just a moment. The eager Wyn

gave her a little push from behind. The boatman's girl ran forward to greet Mr. Lavine.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, timidly, "I am *so* sorry you had this accident."

"I don't know yet whether I am sorry, or not," said Mr. Lavine, grasping her hand.

She turned and walked beside him and her other hand sought his arm in a friendly way. John Jarley stood on the landing and followed them with his eyes. The expression upon his face pleased Wyn immensely.

She beckoned Frank away. "Come on! let's hurry back to the camp before it gets dark. Mrs. Havel will be worried about us."

"And leave Mr. Lavine here?" queried Frank.

"He couldn't be in better hands; could he?"

"I don't know that he could, Wyn!" cried her friend, suddenly. "What a smart girl you are!"

But Wyn would not accept that praise without qualifying it. "The accident was providential," she declared, gravely. "And without *my* assistance I am sure Polly knows how to do the right thing."

Perhaps Polly did. At least she gave much attention to their visitor, and her father could not help but see that Polly and Mr. Lavine were very good friends.

In half an hour Mr. Lavine appeared from the cottage dressed in Mr. Jarley's best suit of clothes. He shook hands with Polly, and then suddenly drew her to him and kissed her on the forehead.

"You are a dear girl, Polly," he declared, with some emotion. "I have to thank you for my little girl's life; and now I am going to thank your father for *mine*."

He walked straight down to the landing where Mr. Jarley was apparently very busy.

"Bill, here, says he will row you over to that camp if you care to go, Mr. Lavine," said the boatman.

"I don't want to see Bill, John," said the real estate man. "I want to see *you*. I am going to take advantage of my position as your guest, John. You cannot turn me off, or refuse to talk with me. You always were a gentleman, John, and I am sure you will listen to me now."

Mr. Jarley looked at him a good deal as Polly had looked (at first) at Wyn Mallory.

"Come! don't hold a grudge, John, just because *I* have been wicked enough to hold one all these years. I was wrong. I freely admit it. Come and sit down here, old man, and let's talk all that old matter over and see where our misunderstanding lay."

"Misunderstanding?"

"Aye," said the other, warmly. "Misunderstanding. For I am convinced now that a brave and generous man like you, John Jarley, would never have knowingly done what—all these years—I have held you to be guilty of!"

He had put his arm through the boatman's. Together they walked aside and sat down upon an upturned skiff. And they were sitting there long after it grew pitch dark upon the landing, with only the glow of Polly's lamp in the kitchen window and that uncertain radiance upon the lake which seems the reflection of the distant stars.

Finally the two men stepped into a skiff and Mr. Jarley rowed it over to Green Knoll Camp. They did not reach the camp until nearly bedtime, and they came so softly to the shore that the girls did not hear the scraping of the boat's keel.

Lavine seized his old friend's hand before leaping ashore.

"Then it's understood, John? You're to get out of this place and come back to Denton? I'm sorry Dr. Shelton is ahead of me in giving Polly something substantial; but you and I are going to begin just where we left off in that Steel Rivet Corporation deal, John.

"About next month I'll have a bigger thing than *that* in sight, and you shall have the same share in it that you would have had in the old deal. You

used to be mighty good in handling your end of the game, John; I want you to take hold of it in just the same way again. Will you agree, old man?"

And Mr. Jarley gave him his hand upon it.

The girls put their visitor to sleep in the cook tent that night and the next morning the whole party went over to Gannet Island to see the work of raising the sunken motor boat carried on. The Busters were as excited as the girls themselves over the affair, and Cave-in-the-Wood Camp was a lively place indeed that day.

Tubby Blaisdell was the only person in the party who wore an aggrieved air. At first he could hardly be made to believe that the girls had not "sicked" the goat upon him two days before when he had stolen away from the other boys for a nap in the woods. Tubby walked lame and could have displayed bruises for several days.

The derrick barge had been towed over to the place where the *Bright Eyes* was sunk, the evening before. The boys helped put the chains around the hull of the sunken boat, for they were all good divers—save the fat youth, who remained on the invalid list.

Before noon the lost boat was raised to the surface and lashed to the side of the barge. Mr. Jarley very quickly tacked a tarpaulin over the hole

in her bottom, and then she was pumped out. Further repairs were made and by night the *Bright Eyes* was riding safely to her own anchor and Mr. Jarley pried open the rusted lock of the cabin.

Dr. Shelton had come over in the *Sunshine Boy* and received from Mr. Jarley the box containing the silver images intact. It made Polly Jarley very happy to hear what the quick-tempered doctor said to her father; and it made Wyn Mallory blush to listen to what they *all* said to her!

"You can't get out of it, girlie!" laughed Frank Cameron. "What they say is quite true. If it hadn't been for you they never would have found the boat, and of course the images would have remained hidden. You're *it,* Wyn Mallory —no getting away from that!"

CHAPTER XXX

STRIKING CAMP

It was a glorious September morning—and no other month of all the year can display such beauties of sky and landscape, such invigorating air, or all Nature in so delightful a mood.

It was a still morning. The newly-kindled fire on Green Knoll sent a spiral of blue smoke mounting skyward. There was the delicious odor of pancakes and farm-made sausage hovering all about the camp of the Go-Ahead girls. Windmill Farm had supplied these first "goodies" of the autumn and the members of the club enjoyed them to the full.

"But, thanks be! there will be no more dishes to wash for a while," declared Grace Hedges.

"Nor beds to make," agreed her partner, Percy Havel.

"Nor fires to kindle," sighed Bessie Lavine.

"Well!" exclaimed Frank Cameron, "an outing in the woods isn't *all* it's cracked up to be, I admit. One might just as well accept a situation as servant in a very untidy household. It would

be about the same thing. But my! we've had some fun between times."

"And such excitement!" declared Mina Everett. "Think of all that's happened to us since we paddled up from Denton two months and more ago."

"And happened to the boys, too," said Frank. "I understand that Tubby Blaisdell has put on ten additional pounds of flesh since yesterday morning."

"Now, Frank! how could he?" gasped Grace.

"Nobody could be much fatter than Tubby already is," added Bess, laughing.

"You never know till you try," chided Mina. "You have put on some flesh yourself, Miss Lavine."

"Bah! they'll soon work it off of me when we're back in school," groaned Bessie. "That's the worst of a vacation—there's always work at the end of it."

"Lazy!" cried Percy. "I believe I'll *love* study when I'm back to the 'scholastic grind.'"

"You can have my share," grumbled Bess "But what about Tubby's additional avoirdupois. Frankie? He's as big as a haystack anyway."

"'All flesh is grass,' the Scriptures say,
So Tubby B.'s a load of hay!"

chuckled Frank. "Is that it? And Tubby is all swelled up now—as big as a barrel."

"That's an awful fib, Frank," declared Mina. "He couldn't be."

"Well, Ferd says he *looks* so. The boys found a bumble bees' nest and Tubby didn't have any paddle to hit them with. So they all went for poor Tubby and they stung him so that his face is twice as big as usual—so Ferd says."

"Something is always happening to that boy," said Bess, laughing. "Hullo! where have *you* been, Wyn?"

Wyn came up from the shore. "I know where she's been," cried Frank. "She has been down there gloating!"

"Gloating?" repeated Percy.

"Over the boat. Is it all there, Wyn?"

The girls ran to the brow of the bank. There, floating off their beach, was a freshly painted motor boat, its brasswork shining, and everything spick and span about it. A very commodious and handsome craft she was, with "Go-Ahead" painted on either side of her bow and on her sternboard.

"Oh, she's all there! nobody has run off with her in the night," laughed Wyn. "And Mr. Lavine couldn't have found a better boat if he had tried—Mr. Jarley says so."

"It was good of Dr. Shelton to sell the *Bright Eyes* to father," said Bessie Lavine. "And they made a good job of it at the boatyard at the Forge."

"She's such a fine and roomy boat," declared Frankie. "We couldn't have expected such a big one, otherwise."

"And it's big enough for the Busters and Professor Skillings to sail home with us, too," said Percy. "Mr. Jarley is going to take charge of the boys' canoes, as well as ours, and ship them to us."

"Bully! An all-day cruise on the lake and then down the Wintinooski by moonlight to-night," sighed Wyn. "It will be just scrumptious!"

"Come, then, girls," warned Mrs. Havel. "We must strike camp. Everything must be rolled up and secured, ready for shipment on the bateau when it comes. I saw the sail of the bateau going past the point of Gannet Island early this morning. I expect the boys are all ready before this time."

"Let's wait for them," said the languid Bess. "What's the use of having boy friends if you don't make use of them?"

"Listen to her!" exclaimed Wyn, with scorn. "Depend upon the boys? I—rather—guess—not!"

"Don't be so independent, Miss," returned

Miss Lavine. "You'll be glad to have Davie at your beck and call again when we get back home."

Wyn laughed. "It's all right to have them within reach if need should arise——"

"Like a mouse, or a snake," put in Frank Cameron.

"Goodness!" drawled Grace. "After all the bugs, and worms, and caterpillars, and other monsters we have faced—alone and single-handed—here in the woods, I don't believe I'll *ever* squeal if I put my hand upon a mouse in the pantry."

"Pshaw!" said Frank. "You only *think* that. It's the frailties of the sex we cannot get over. You all know very well that a boy with a teenty, tinty garter-snake on the end of a stick could chase this whole crowd either into the lake, or into hysterics."

"Shame!" cried Wyn. "That is rank treachery to the 'manhood' of us girls of the Go-Ahead Club."

"You are right, Wyn," agreed Mina. "Why, we none of us have any nerves now—but plenty of *nerve*, of course."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank, starting back suddenly. "See that! Is it a spider over your head, Mina?"

Miss Everett uttered an ear-piercing shriek and

sprang up, to run madly from the spot. Frank burst into laughter.

"How brave! Such nerve! My, my! we'll none of us ever be afraid again——"

They all pitched upon the joker, and Mrs. Havel had to come to her rescue with the reminder that time was flying.

"If you want to show the boys that you are really fit to camp out alone, get to work!" she commanded.

The next hour was a busy one for the Go-Aheads. But how much more handily they went about the striking of the tents than they had about raising them two months before!

Life in the open had really done wonders for the girls from Denton. They knew how to do things that they had never dreamed of doing at home. Most of them had learned how to swing an axe, although the boys had faithfully paid their forfeit by cutting the firewood for Green Knoll Camp all summer. The girls could use a hammer, too, and tie workman-like knots, and do a host of other things that had never come into their lives before.

"It is well to be sufficient unto one's self," Mrs. Havel told them. "A girl cannot always expect to find a boy at her beck and call. It is nice to be waited on by the male sex—and it is good for

boys to learn to attend properly upon their girl friends; it is better, however, to know how to accept favors gracefully from our boy friends, and yet not really *need* their assistance."

So Green Knoll Camp presented a very orderly appearance when the boys and Professor Skillings appeared ahead of the bateau that was to take all their goods and chattels back to their home town.

"Goodness! aren't you girls smart?" cried Dave Shepard, the first ashore. "Are you *all* ready?"

"Every bit," declared Wyn.

"Then we can get off in the *Go-Ahead* at once?"

"Right," declared Frank, laughing. "And as soon as you can teach Wyn and me how to manage the motor boat, we girls sha'n't need you boys at all."

"A fine lot of suffragettes you are going to make," growled Dave.

"No; we'll never be 'suffering-cats,' Davie," returned Frank, laughing. "We don't need to. Let us alone for being able to get the best of you Busters whenever we want to."

"Isn't she right?" cried Ferdinand Roberts, admiringly. "You can't beat 'em!"

"No, you can't," snarled Tubby Blaisdell, very

puffy about his face, and with a wry smile. "They even get the goats to help 'em."

"They got your goat, old man," said Dave, chuckling, "that's sure. But you blame them for a crime they did not commit, I believe. Remember how many times you have tried to trick *them?*"

"Huh!" snorted the fat youth. "Did I ever succeed?"

"I hope," said Mrs. Havel, breaking in upon this "give and take" conversation, "that your parents will not blame me if you all appear—both girls and boys—to have lost your good manners here in the woods. Do simmer down. Remember, you return to civilization to-day."

"Oh, dear! don't remind us—don't, dear Mrs. Havel," cried Frank.

"Just think!" scoffed Ferd. "You girls will have to be all 'dolled up' on Sunday again. Won't you *hate* it?"

"Rather go around in a tramping skirt and without a hat," admitted Wyn, frankly.

"The tastes of girlhood are much different now from what they were in *my* day," said the lady, with a sigh. "When I was young we never thought of doing the things you girls do now."

"Isn't that why you didn't do them?" asked Frank, slily. "Perhaps we girls of this generation have better-developed imaginations."

"Oh, sure!" cried Ferd, with sarcasm. "You girls are wonders—just as smart as little Hen Rogers was last term when Miss Haley asked him if he could name any town in Alaska."

"What did he say?" asked Frank, with interest.

"He said, 'Nome'—and she sent him to the foot of the class," chuckled Ferd.

"Oh! aren't you smart?" railed Bessie. "That joke is the twin to the one about the boy who was asked by the professor in physics if he knew what 'nasal organ' meant. And the boy said, 'No, sir,' and got a 'perfect' mark."

"Come on, folks!" cried Wyn. "Stop telling silly jokes and bear a hand here. All these things have to go into the boat."

Mr. Jarley and Polly joined them just then, Mr. Jarley to collect the canoes and take them to the Forge, while Polly was to go with the two clubs aboard the newly-named *Go-Ahead* to Denton.

Polly, in a brand-new boating costume, was so pretty that the boys couldn't keep their eyes away from her. She was happy, too, and this fact gave an entirely different expression to her face.

She was to go home with Wyn, and in a few weeks her father would follow and establish a home for them both in Denton. He was going, as Mr. Lavine declared, to start in his old home town

just where he had left off more than ten years before. And Polly was to enter the academy with the girls of Green Knoll Camp on the opening day.

The party got under weigh on the *Go-Ahead* and were some miles down the lake ere it was discovered that Professor Skillings had forgotten both his shoes and his hat, for he had paddled over to the girls' camp barefoot as usual. It was too late to go back then, for the baggage had all been put aboard the bateau.

So the professor went home with a handkerchief tied around his head and a pair of moccasins on his feet—the latter borrowed from Dr. Shelton, at whose dock they stopped for luncheon.

The bluff doctor insisted that the whole party come ashore and lunch with him. He had arranged for Polly's tuition at the Denton Academy, had bought her text-books, and when the party left for home that day he thrust into Polly Jolly's hand a silver chain purse with more money in it than the boatman's daughter had ever possessed before.

Polly Jolly was beginning to live up to the loving name that Wyn Mallory had given to her. She was the very gayest of the gay as the *Go-Ahead* proceeded down the lake and then down the Wintinooski to Denton.

The last of the journey was taken after they

had had a picnic supper, and under the brilliant light of the September moon. The boys and girls sang and told stories, and otherwise enjoyed themselves. But as they drew near home they quieted down.

The summer was behind them. For more than two months they had skylarked, and enjoyed themselves to the full on the lake and in the woods. They "were going back to civilization," as Frankie said, and it made them a bit thoughtful.

"I expect," said Mina Everett, "that we have had just the best time that we will ever have in all our lives."

"Why so?" demanded Bess. "Can't we go camping again?"

"Sure we will!" declared Dave Shepard.

"I see what Mina means—and I guess she is right," Wyn remarked, earnestly. "We may go camping again; but it will never be just like this first time. For the girls, I mean. We had never done such a thing before. And then—if we go next summer—we'll be a whole year older. And a year is a long, long time."

"Long enough to spoil some of you girls, I expect," grumbled Ferdinand.

"Spoil us, Mister? How's that?" snapped Bess, at once taking up the gauntlet.

"You'll be wanting to put up your hair and let

down your skirts, and will be wearing all the new-style folderols by next summer," retorted Ferd.

"Oh, won't they, just!" groaned Tubby, in agreement.

"You wait and see, Smartie!" cried Frank Cameron.

"We are not like the girls you are thinking of," declared Grace, with some warmth.

"No, indeed," agreed Percy.

"The Go-Aheads are going to fool you, Ferdie," said Wyn, laughing. "Just you watch us. *All* girls aren't in a hurry to grow up and ape their mothers and older sisters. We're going in for athletics and the 'simple life' strongly; aren't we, girls?"

Her fellow club members agreed in a hearty chorus. "Besides," added Bess, "we can have all the fun the other kind of girls have as well as our own kind. We can dance, and go to parties, and wear pretty frocks for *part* of the time."

"What did I tell you?" demanded Ferd, grinning.

"Never mind, Ferd, never mind," said Dave, softly. "We'll be a bit that way ourselves before the winter's over. You know, Ferd, that your folks will insist on your keeping your hair cut and your finger-nails manicured."

"And of course I'll have a blister on my heel

from wearing dancing pumps before the season is over," groaned Tubby. "Oh, well! it's not altogether our fault that we grow up so fast. Our folks make us," and he groaned again, for dancing school was one of the fat youth's pet aversions.

"That is what youth is for," advised Mrs. Havel, who overheard all this. "It is a preparation for manhood and womanhood."

"Dear me! Dear me! let's forget it," cried Dave. "This is no time for feeling solemn. Thank goodness, for two solid months we have forgotten all about the 'duty we owe to posterity,' as the professor expresses it. Maybe next year we can forget it again in our camps upon the shores of Lake Honotonka."

"Well expressed, little boy—well expressed," agreed Wynifred, tweaking one of Dave's curls that would *not* lie down, no matter what he did to them. "My! but we *have* grown serious. This is no way to end our camping days, girls. Come! another lively song——"

The motor boat drifted in to the boathouse landing to the lilt of a familiar rowing song. Wyn's camping days were over; the outing of the Go-Ahead Club was at an end.

THE END

SOMETHING ABOUT

AMY BELL MARLOWE

AND HER BOOKS FOR GIRLS

In these days, when the printing presses are turning out so many books for girls that are good, bad and indifferent, it is refreshing to come upon the works of such a gifted authoress as Miss Amy Bell Marlowe, who is now under contract to write exclusively for Messrs. Grosset & Dunlap.

In many ways Miss Marlowe's books may be compared with those of Miss Alcott and Mrs. Meade, but all are thoroughly modern and wholly American in scene and action. Her plots, while never improbable, are exceedingly clever, and her girlish characters are as natural as they are interesting.

On the following pages will be found a list of Miss Marlowe's books. Every girl in our land ought to read these fresh and wholesome tales. They are to be found at all booksellers. Each volume is handsomely illustrated and bound in cloth, stamped in colors. Published by Grosset & Dunlap, New York. A free catalogue of Miss Marlowe's books may be had for the asking.

THE OLDEST OF FOUR

"I DON'T see any way out!"

It was Natalie's mother who said that, after the awful news had been received that Mr. Raymond had been lost in a shipwreck on the Atlantic. Natalie was the oldest of four children, and the family was left with but scant means for support.

"I've got to do something—yes, I've just got to!" Natalie said to herself, and what the brave girl did is well related in "The Oldest of Four; Or, Natalie's Way Out." In this volume we find Natalie with a strong desire to become a writer. At first she contributes to a local paper, but soon she aspires to larger things, and comes in contact with the editor of a popular magazine. This man becomes her warm friend, and not only aids her in a literary way but also helps in a hunt for the missing Mr. Raymond.

Natalie has many ups and downs, and has to face more than one bitter disappointment. But she is a plucky girl through and through.

"One of the brightest girls' stories ever penned," one well-known author has said of this book, and we agree with him. Natalie is a thoroughly lovable character, and one long to be remembered. Published as are all the Amy Bell Marlowe books, by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, and for sale by all booksellers. Ask your dealer to let you look the volume over.

THE GIRLS OF HILLCREST FARM

"WE'LL go to the old farm, and we'll take boarders! We can fix the old place up, and, maybe, make money!"

The father of the two girls was broken down in health and a physician had recommended that he go to the country, where he could get plenty of fresh air and sunshine. An aunt owned an abandoned farm and she said the family could live on this and use the place as they pleased. It was great sport moving and getting settled, and the boarders offered one surprise after another. There was a mystery about the old farm, and a mystery concerning one of the boarders, and how the girls got to the bottom of affairs is told in detail in the story, which is called, "The Girls of Hillcrest Farm; Or, The Secret of the Rocks."

It was great fun to move to the farm, and once the girls had the scare of their lives. And they attended a great "vendue" too.

"I just had to write that story—I couldn't help it," said Miss Marlowe, when she handed in the manuscript. "I knew just such a farm when I was a little girl, and oh! what fun I had there! And there was a mystery about that place, too!"

Published, like all the Marlowe books, by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, and for sale wherever good books are sold.

A LITTLE MISS NOBODY

"Oh, she's only a little nobody! Don't have anything to do with her!"

How often poor Nancy Nelson heard those words, and how they cut her to the heart. And the saying was true, she *was* a nobody. She had no folks, and she did not know where she had come from. All she did know was that she was at a boarding school and that a lawyer paid her tuition bills and gave her a mite of spending money.

"I am going to find out who I am, and where I came from," said Nancy to herself, one day, and what she did, and how it all ended, is absorbingly related in "A Little Miss Nobody; Or, With the Girls of Pinewood Hall." Nancy made a warm friend of a poor office boy who worked for that lawyer, and this boy kept his eyes and ears open and learned many things.

The book tells much about boarding school life, of study and fun mixed, and of a great race on skates. Nancy made some friends as well as enemies, and on more than one occasion proved that she was "true blue" in the best meaning of that term.

Published by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, and for sale by booksellers everywhere. If you desire a catalogue of Amy Bell Marlowe books send to the publishers for it and it will come free.

THE GIRL FROM SUNSET RANCH

HELEN was very thoughtful as she rode along the trail from Sunset Ranch to the View. She had lost her father but a month before, and he had passed away with a stain on his name—a stain of many years' standing, as the girl had just found out.

"I am going to New York and I am going to clear his name!" she resolved, and just then she saw a young man dashing along, close to the edge of a cliff. Over he went, and Helen, with no thought of the danger to herself, went to the rescue.

Then the brave Western girl found herself set down at the Grand Central Terminal in New York City. She knew not which way to go or what to do. Her relatives, who thought she was poor and ignorant, had refused to even meet her. She had to fight her way along from the start, and how she did this, and won out, is well related in "The Girl from Sunset Ranch; Or, Alone in a Great City."

This is one of the finest of Amy Bell Marlowe's books, with its true-to-life scenes of the plains and mountains, and of the great metropolis. Helen is a girl all readers will love from the start.

Published by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, and for sale by booksellers everywhere.

"Oh, girls, such news!" cried Wynifred Mallory to her chums, one day. "We can go camping on Lake Honotonka! Isn't it grand!"

It certainly was, and the members of the Go-Ahead Club were delighted. Soon they set off, with their boy friends to keep them company in another camp not far away. Those boys played numerous tricks on the girls, and the girls retaliated, you may be sure. And then Wyn did a strange girl a favor, and learned how some ancient statues of rare value had been lost in the lake, and how the girl's father was accused of stealing them.

"We must do all we can for that girl," said Wyn. But this was not so easy, for the girl campers had many troubles of their own. They had canoe races, and one of them fell overboard and came close to drowning, and then came a big storm, and a nearby tree was struck by lightning.

"I used to love to go camping when a girl, and I love to go yet," said Miss Marlowe, in speaking of this tale, which is called, "Wyn's Camping Days; Or, The Outing of the Go-Ahead Club." "I think all girls ought to know the pleasures of summer life under canvas."

A book that ought to be in the hands of all girls. Issued by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, and for sale by booksellers everywhere.

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THE OUTDOOR GIRLS AT WILD ROSE LODGE
THE OUTDOOR GIRLS IN THE SADDLE
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The girls go to the country for two weeks—and fall in with all sorts of curious and exciting happenings.

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Mrs. Garis turned to girls' books directly after her marriage, and of these she has written many. She believes in girls, studies them and depicts them with pen both skilled and sympathetic.

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